

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

PG 68-4-10
Magi No.DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Dorsey Plumbing & Heating Co.

2. Location

street & number 6100 R.I. Ave. not for publicationcity, town Riverdale vicinity of congressional district #5

state MD county Prince George's County

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name John Dorsey Plumbing & Heating Co., Inc.

street & number 6100 R.I. Ave. telephone no.:

city, town Riverdale state and zip code MD

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 4019

street & number 14735 Main St. folio 158

city, town Upper Marlboro state MD

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. _____

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<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.

The building at 6100 R.I. Ave. is a red brick building whose principal (east) facade, fronting on R.I. Ave., clearly indicates that the building was built in three parts, and in two stages. The centre portion, roughly 50' long, is two stories with a small false front rising another foot above the middle section of the unit. Two large window openings, now filled in to accomodate smaller windows, flank a central doorway. A wooden sign runs across the upper central portion of this section. The northern portion of this facade, like the south portion, is roughly 30' long. It is 1 1/2 stories, with two symmetrical window openings in the upper section. The south portion is the principal business front: It is two full stories, with a central doorway and two flanking windows evenly spaced on the first floor, and three correspondingly-placed windows on the upper floor. The principal business sign fills most of the space between the two floors of this portion of the facade.

The remainder of the building is of cement blocks, and makes up a complex of wings that form a paved loading dock/parking lot in the rear, occupying the southwest corner of the lot. To the north, a gravel drive leads to overhead doors in a garage attached on the northwest side of the building. Some shrubbery scantily adorns the east facade, and a chain link fence surrounds the property on most of the three remaining sides.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates	Builder/Architect
check: Applicable Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D and/or	
Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G	
Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local	

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

6100 R.I. Ave. is built on lots 12 & 13 of Block 40, on property whose value from the beginning of Riverdale's history derived primarily from the access it enjoyed to the two main transportation lines serving the suburb; the B & O line is across R.I. Ave., to the east, and the streetcar line ran immediately in front of it along R.I. Ave. Half a block to the north was Riverdale's main commercial complex at the principal east-west crossing of the tracks.

This land was part of the "Riversdale" estate of the Calvert family. The B & O line was laid through the property in the mid-19th century, but what became the town of Riverdale was not platted until 1889, two years after 475 acres of the estate were bought by the Riverdale Park Co., with the intention of developing a commuter suburb for Washington.

The actual development of the suburb of Riverdale was initiated in 1890/91, with the construction of the B & O RR Station. The fact that it was located at the (present day) Queensbury Ave. crossing argues strongly for the likelihood that this point was envisioned by the suburb's developers as the actual "centre" of the community. The community's major institution, the Presbyterian Church, was located a block away, and streetcar service initiated in 1899 along (present day) R.I. Ave. reinforced the idea of the centrality of the Crossing to the life of the community.

The present building occupies the site of an old coal and lumber company's yard, which was there as early as 1924, according to the Sanborn Fire Insurance map of that year. At that time, this yard was a conglomeration of detached buildings, probably of temporary construction. The first major improvement on the property was made in the late 1920s, probably soon after its was sold to Frank Owings in trust for

Mary Waldron. In 1939, the property was obtained by Lewis R. Thompson, and a major improvement was made to what is listed, on a 1940 Atlas Map, as the Riverdale Fuel and Coal Company. Changes in design, primarily brickwork, suggest that the central portion is the oldest, and that the two flanking sections were added on together, at a later date. The present building complex that is now occupied by the Dorsey Company, probably reached its present form after a series of further improvements made to the property in the late 1940s.

As even a cursory glance of the property confirms, this series of improvements was affected without any apparent regard for design continuity. In every sense, it represents a story of incremental growth of a modestly-scaled commercial enterprise (with workshops and garages added haphazardly to the rear). Because of its past use as Riverdale's early coal and lumber yard, a type of business activity whose importance is measured by its proximity to the community's commercial and transportation "hub," the site of 6100 R.I. Ave. is significant to the history of Riverdale. But the present structure, with its various addition-upon-additions adapted to the needs of a less historically-significant element of Riverdale's present economic life, cannot be said to contribute substantially either to the significance of the fabric of Riverdale's commercial history.

