Prince George's County Historic Site Summary Sheet

Survey Number: PG76A24

Name: **Thornton-Wood Farmstead**

Date: ca. 1910, 1925-1967

Location: 4801 Auth Road, Suitland, Maryland

Description: The Thornton-Wood Farmstead is a small remnant of a property originating in the second decade of the twentieth century and utilized as a truck farm by the Thornton and Wood families until a few decades ago when almost all of the land was sold for commercial development. Currently the site is hemmed in by automobile dealerships, restaurants, roads and office buildings. The modest five-building ensemble is composed of mostly early twentieth century frame buildings- a dwelling built 1910-1967, garage, stable, meathouse and vegetable storage building.

Significance: This early twentieth century farmstead--the principal residence and several outbuildings survive in a densely populated area developed with huge commercial, business and educational complexes plus post World War II subdivision. Until the 1960's when development pressure mounted for the area along MD 5 (Branch Ave) such rural farmsteads were the only settlements in this heretofore underdeveloped section of Prince George's County. The farmstead preserves, for now, a traditional farmstead ambiance: a collection of outbuildings centered on a large dwelling. Though hedged in with mammoth car dealerships, this complex embodies a sense of the historic pre-surburban character of the area. Nonetheless, the farm, greatly reduced in size, and exhibiting some change in the material fabric of the dwelling and with considerable degradation of its immediate environs, has lost integrity of location.

PG76A24
Thornton-Wood Farmstead
Suitland, Maryland

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period (s): Industrial-Urban Dominance 1870-1930
Modern Period, 1930-Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s): Agriculture/Architecture

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Suburban

Historic Function and Use: Domestic/single dwelling/residence
Agriculture/Subsistence/Outbuilding/Storage
Agriculture/Subsistence/Outbuilding/Meathouse
Agriculture/Subsistence/Outbuilding/Stable
Known Design Source: None

Survey No. PG76A24

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Magi No.

DOE __yes __no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Thornton Wood Farmstead

and/or common Linda V. Wood Farmstead

2. Location

street & number 4801 Auth Road N/A not for publication

city, town Suitland ___ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Prince George's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	✓ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
✓ building(s)	✓ private	___ 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
	✓ not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

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

name Linda V. Wood

street & number 4810 Branch Avenue telephone no.:

city, town Temple Hills state and zip code Maryland 20748

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Courthouse liber 2484

street & number folio

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. PG76A24

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	✓ original site
✓ good	___ ruins	✓ 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.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 7.1

8. Significance

Survey No. PG76A24

Period

___ prehistoric
___ 1400–1499
___ 1500–1599
___ 1600–1699
___ 1700–1799
___ 1800–1899
✓ 1900–

Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

___ archeology-prehistoric
___ archeology-historic
___ agriculture
✓ architecture
___ art
___ commerce
___ communications
___ community planning
___ conservation
___ economics
___ education
___ engineering
___ exploration/settlement
___ industry
___ invention
___ landscape architecture
___ law
___ literature
___ military
___ music
___ philosophy
___ politics/government
___ religion
___ science
___ sculpture
___ social/ humanitarian
___ theater
___ transportation
___ other (specify)

Specific dates ca. 1910, 1925 1967 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

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.

SEE CONTNUATION SHEET 8.1

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. PG76A24

Personal Communication with Wiliam Wood

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of ~~nominated~~ inventoried property 5.84

Quadrangle name Anacostia

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Tax Parcel

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 Rita M. Suffness, Leader, Cultural Resources Group

organization MD State Highway Administration date July 3, 1997

street & number 707 N. Calvert Street telephone

city or town Baltimore state Maryland

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

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DHCP/DHCD
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023

PS-2746

PG76A24
Thornton-Wood Farmstead
Suitland, Maryland

Continuation Sheet 7.1
Description

Description Summary

The Thornton-Wood Farmstead is a small remnant of a property originating in the second decade of the twentieth century and utilized as a truck farm by the Thornton and Wood families until a few decades ago when almost all of the land was sold for commercial development. Currently the site is hemmed in by automobile dealerships, restaurants, roads and office buildings. The modest five-building ensemble is composed of mostly early twentieth century frame buildings- a dwelling built 1910-1967, garage, stable, meathouse and vegetable storage building.

Description:

The Thornton-Wood House and outbuildings are located on a ca. .5 acre remnant of farmland which had been owned by the Soper and O'Donnell families in the nineteenth century, then Thornton and Woods families in the twentieth century. The Woods family operated a truck farm for decades before disposing of much of the land in the last few decades. The entire area had remained agricultural for decades following World War II, but developed rapidly when sold. It is currently the location of dense suburban development with car dealerships, restaurants, offices and educational institutions plus recently constructed suburban housing intruding on the site from all sides.

The Thornton-Wood House is located on the east side of MD 5 just north of the Capital Beltway (I-495). It is the focus of a small cluster of agricultural buildings: a stable, meathouse, vegetable storage shed and garage. The large dwelling is roughly square in shape with an ell which incorporates a poured concrete washhouse which was originally free-standing. The house assumed its present form during several construction phases which occurred between the 1910 construction of the west-facing main block and the north facing one-story brick addition (porch) in 1967.

The main block is a ca. 1910 two and one-half story frame structure (clad with aluminum siding) composed of a rectangular west section (with gable roof paralleling the west-oriented entrance facade) extended to the east in 1925 with a full-width rear section encompassed by a broad cross-gable roof interrupted on the two slopes by paired-window dormers. This gable roof is expressed on the front (west) elevation by a broad cross gable with a single window near the peak. All of the cornices are boxed and there are cornice returns on all dormers, gable ends and cross gables.

PG76A24
Thornton-Wood Farmstead
Suitland, Maryland

Continuation Sheet 7.2
Description

The entrance facade of the main block, four bays in width, is characterized by fenestration offset to each side, with the two principal entrances in the center bays. A third entrance is located in the 1967 brick addition (which looks like an enclosed porch). although all of the fenestration is two-over-two or one-over one original frame windows, the brick addition has aluminum-frame jalousied windows. The north and south elevations of this original block were originally identical (the lower level of the north end obscured by brick addition) one window directly above another in the end gables (with a small window arrayed over those below near the roof peak) and two bays in the rear wing, with a door in the east bay and a paired window in the large dormer at the roof level. A full width one-story shed-roofed open porch carried on Doric columns shelters the first story of the entrance facade.

Immediately to the rear of this structure [as built by Bob and Sam Soper (uncles of present owner) for S. Edwin Thornton in 1910] was a free-standing poured-concrete washhouse. It was joined to the 1925 addition to the main block by a one-story pantry constructed by William Wood in 1936 on the south elevation. The interstice between these three parts (main block, washhouse and pantry) was further filled in by a two-story addition directly behind the pantry which contains a half bath on the first level and two rooms above. The south section of this infill is surmounted by a gable roof, and the north part by a shed roof. It was constructed in 1936. The fifth construction phase is represented by the one-story brick addition, approximating an enclosed porch, which wraps around the northeast corner, joining the washhouse encompassed by the rear ell.

There are four outbuildings clustered around the dwelling and all contribute to the significance of the site. Family members relate that the frame ones probably date to the second decade of the twentieth century. A small frame meathouse is located just off the northeast corner of the house. The gable roof parallels the flank of the structure which is oriented north-south with the entrance in the south gable end. It has been clad with aluminum siding.

The vegetable storage building, constructed of concrete block, is located just east of the house. Rectangular in shape with gable roof paralleling the flank of the structure, it has four windows in the south elevation and is entered through a door in the gable end. The stable and garage, arranged in perpendicular fashion to the north of the dwelling, are both frame with white aluminum siding and dark trim to match the dwelling and meathouse. The stable, which is rectangular with a gable roof and a single chimney offset to the east at the roof peak, is characterized by windows in the gable ends and one doorway centered in the long south elevation, surmounted by a nine-light window. The garage is immediately adjacent to the

house (just off the west gable end) and has the garage door centered in the south gable end.

Historic and Geographic Context: This property is located on the western side of Prince George's county abutting the District of Columbia. A suburb of Washington, D.C. the area is characterized by densely built-up residential neighborhoods crossed by several main arterial roadways lines with commercial strip malls. Before the 1950's this area of Prince George's County was generally rural and agricultural with few small crossroads settlements. The only crossroads within the area which developed an identity was "Wood's Corner," named for a fruit stand, no longer extant, operated in the twentieth century by the Wood family. It serviced the few farms and the very small population that existed prior to 1950 near the intersection of MD 5 (Branch Ave) and Auth Road, an area currently overwhelmed by commercial development, especially mammoth automobile dealerships. Although some suburban development had taken place on the fringes of this area in the 1940's, it was not until the cessation of World War II that widespread development and suburbanization began in this area of Prince George's County.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Suburbanization of Prince George's County

The earliest suburbs of Prince George's County date to the late nineteenth century and are located in the northern section of the County. After the Civil War, Washington took on a "boom town" atmosphere and in a tight housing market, Washington residents began to look outside the District for housing. The initial growth occurred in the previously settled towns along the B & O Railroad north of the district, there the new residents could enjoy the established local amenities (Virta 1984:190). These towns included Hyattsville, Bladensburg and Beltsville. Other developments were constructed more specifically as railroad suburbs. These places included Riverdale Park, Berwyn and Berwyn Heights, College Park and Takoma Park, all constructed in the late 1800's.

However, as the northern sections of the County were experiencing steady development, the western section of the county remained virtually undisturbed. Both the1861 Simon Martenet Map and the 1878 Hopkins Atlas of the "Spaulding District" show a sparsely settled area with small settlements around Suitland, Silver and Camp Springs outside of the area in which this site is located. The 1955 USGS map (Anacostia Quadrangle) shows that the area was still primarily agricultural as late as the 1940's. The development of the area did not begin until the early 1950's, with the bulk of it occurring within the last two decades, when the growth was intense. There are a number of factors that contributed to this massive development of the rural countryside in the county, including the expansion of the Federal Government in the 1940's, the

overall development of roads and bridges linking the areas to Washington, and the movement of Federal government agencies and facilities to the new suburbs.

The increase in the Federal work force began in the 1930's with the initiation of the New Deal and continued through World War II and on into the 1950's. This explosive expansion was attended by a rise in land values and property taxes, which again sent the Washingtonians into the suburbs in search of affordable housing. What distinguished this expansion from the late nineteenth century suburban development was it's spread into previously undeveloped area, principally into western Prince George's County. This was made possible by the automobile; the automobile allowed for development away from the railroad lines, which had limited the earlier nineteenth century developments. In addition, road improvements throughout the county as well as bridge improvement over the Potomac provided easy access to the District and made a daily commute into the district a possibility.

Plentiful land at low cost motivated the Federal government to locate offices in the suburbs as well. The Suitland Federal Center opened in 1941 on the north side of Silver Hill Road. The complex was constructed on 285 acres of land and was built to house up to three thousand employees of the Federal Bureau of the Census, Navy Hydrographic Office an a file office of the Public Roads Administration (Evening Sun, August 14, 1942).

Another major development in the area was the construction of Andrew's Air Force Base near Camp Springs. Building began in 1941 on approximately 4000 acres of farm and open land. A few years later the Suitland Parkway was constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers to provide safe and rapid access to the air base from Washington. Carrying traffic south and west of Suitland, the parkway also provided better access for Washington commuters to the growing neighborhoods on either side of the road. These factors drew commuters and developers out to this section of Prince George's County bordered by Suitland Parkway on the north, MD 5 on the west, I-495 on the south and Suitland Road on the east. The result was the rapid construction of speculative housing and new neighborhoods. Some of the housing was constructed around the core of older settlements and some represented completely new developments.

Development in the Study Area

The only village in the immediate vicinity of the historic site that pre-dates 1950 is Morningside, however, it was only extended to the west side of Suitland Road in the 1960's and 1970's with the construction of subdivisions known as Andrews Estates, Skyline, Skyline Hills and

Tournament Court. The original portion of Morningside, located on the east side of Suitland Road, was built over a number of years beginning in 1938-39 by developer Morgan Wayson and his brother-in-law Randolph Hopkins. The original subdivision contained approximately 500 homes, which were mostly two-story Cape Cod style cottages on the east side of Suitland road. It housed veterans of World War II and their families, plus workers in the Federal Center in Suitland, its close neighbor (Prince George's County Magazine, 1983: 55). Most of the development of Morningside took place in the 1950's after it was incorporated in 1949.

With the construction of the Andrews Air Force Base and the improvement to MD 5 (Branch Avenue) in the 1950's, the Camp Springs area, which is also outside of the study area, witnessed the construction of several suburban developments. One development was Middleton Valley, located off Old Branch Avenue, on the fringes of the western edge of the project area. This development was created after old farmland belonging to the Middleton family was subdivided and made into a residential suburb. Additional subdivisions developed in the last few decades in the vicinity of the old Middleton property are Broadview and Stan Haven.

In the project study area some of the agricultural properties owned by the Auth, Darcey, Soper, Thornton and Wood families survived until fairly recently, as the subdivision and development of the farms did not begin until the 1950's. Of the twelve historic structures remaining in the project area, seven date to the first quarter of the twentieth century. These are: Thornton-Wood Farmstead (PG76A24), Milstead House (PG76A27), John and Marie Darcey Houses (PGA7631), Anthony Soper House (PG76A34), Eugene Darcey House (PG76A32), John Mulloy House (PG76A29), and the Roland Darcey Houses (PG76A32. Five properties date to the second quarter of the twentieth century. These are: Ammann House (PG76A33), Holmes House (PG76A30), Knox House (PG76A26), L. and R. Lawnmower (PG76A25) and the Marescalco House (PG76A21).

The development of Auth Village by the Darcey (and the related Ammann) families in the 1950's started the rush to subdivide by other families, resulting in developments like Manchester Estates, Darcey Manor, Darcey Estates, Andrews Village, Andrews Manor and Woodlane. These were constructed since 1950 on the farmland previously owned by these families and utilized primarily for truck farming. Long time families in the area report that Auth Road was a dirt lane, called Epiphany Lane, until well into the sixth decade of the twentieth century. Its intersection with the predecessor (Old Branch Avenue) of MD 5 was known as Wood's Corner for the fruit stand and farm owned by the Woods (and Soper) families. Across from it on the west side of Old Branch Avenue was Pat's Carryout and Restaurant (PG76A25), currently

housing the L and R Lawnmower, and which was discontinued in the 1960's. The history of the study area exemplifies the history of rapid suburbanization, a process that has affected both the function and appearance of the region. In less than fifty years, the area went from a rural, agricultural region of Prince George's County to a modern, bedroom suburb or Washington, D.C. This suburbanization continues at breakneck speed today.

PG76A24
Thornton-Wood Farmstead
Suitland, Maryland

Continuation Sheet 8.1
Statement of Significance

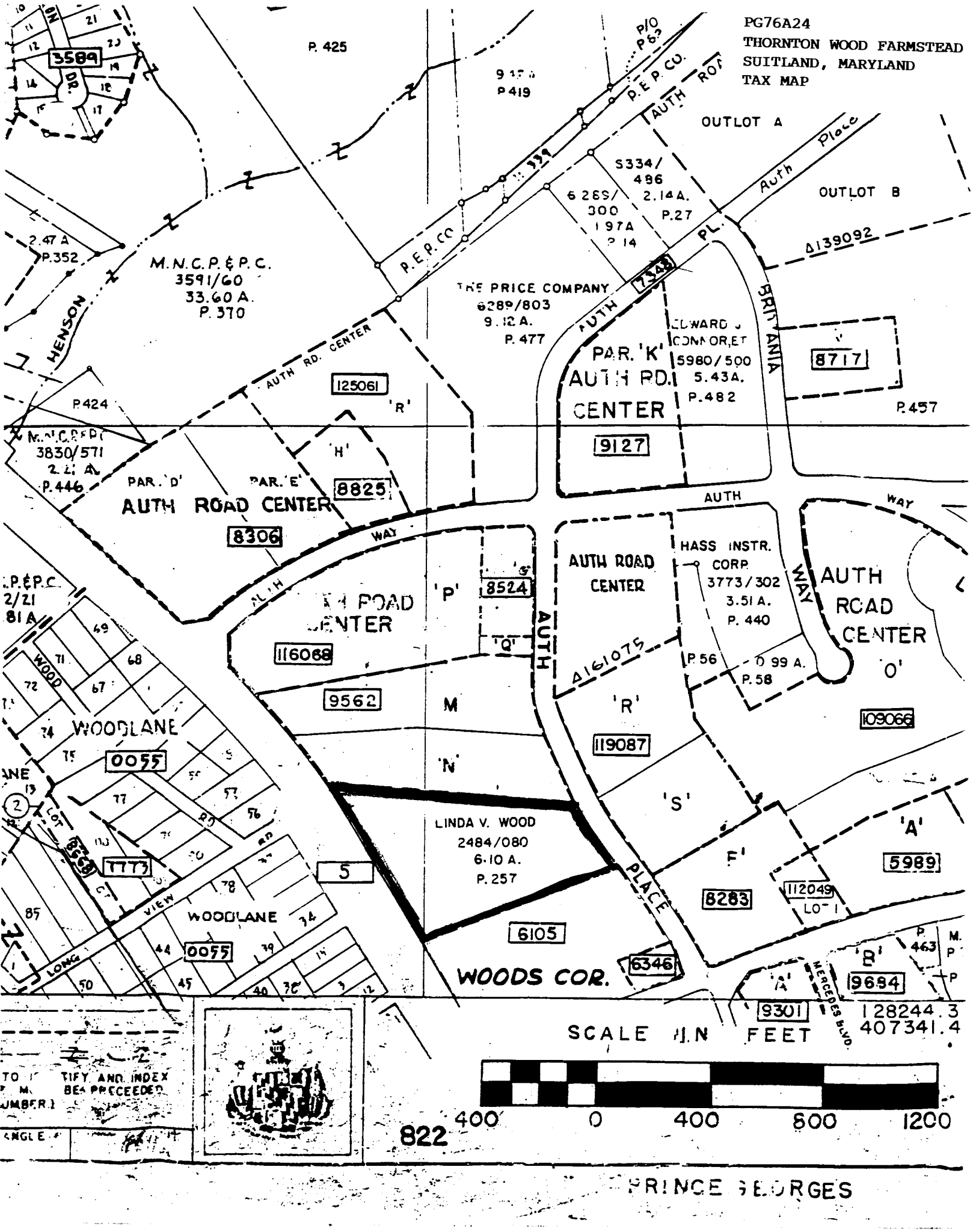
Significance Summary

This early twentieth century farmstead--the principal residence and several outbuildings survive in a densely populated area developed with huge commercial, business and educational complexes plus post World War II subdivision. Until the 1960's when development pressure mounted for the area along MD 5 (Branch Ave) such rural farmsteads were the only settlements in this heretofore underdeveloped section of Prince George's County. The farmstead preserves, for now, a traditional farmstead ambiance: a collection of outbuildings centered on a large dwelling. Though hedged in with mammoth car dealerships, this complex embodies a sense of the historic pre-surburban character of the area. Nonetheless, the farm, greatly reduced in size, and exhibiting considerable change to the dwelling and with condierable degradation in the immediate environs, has lost integrity of location.

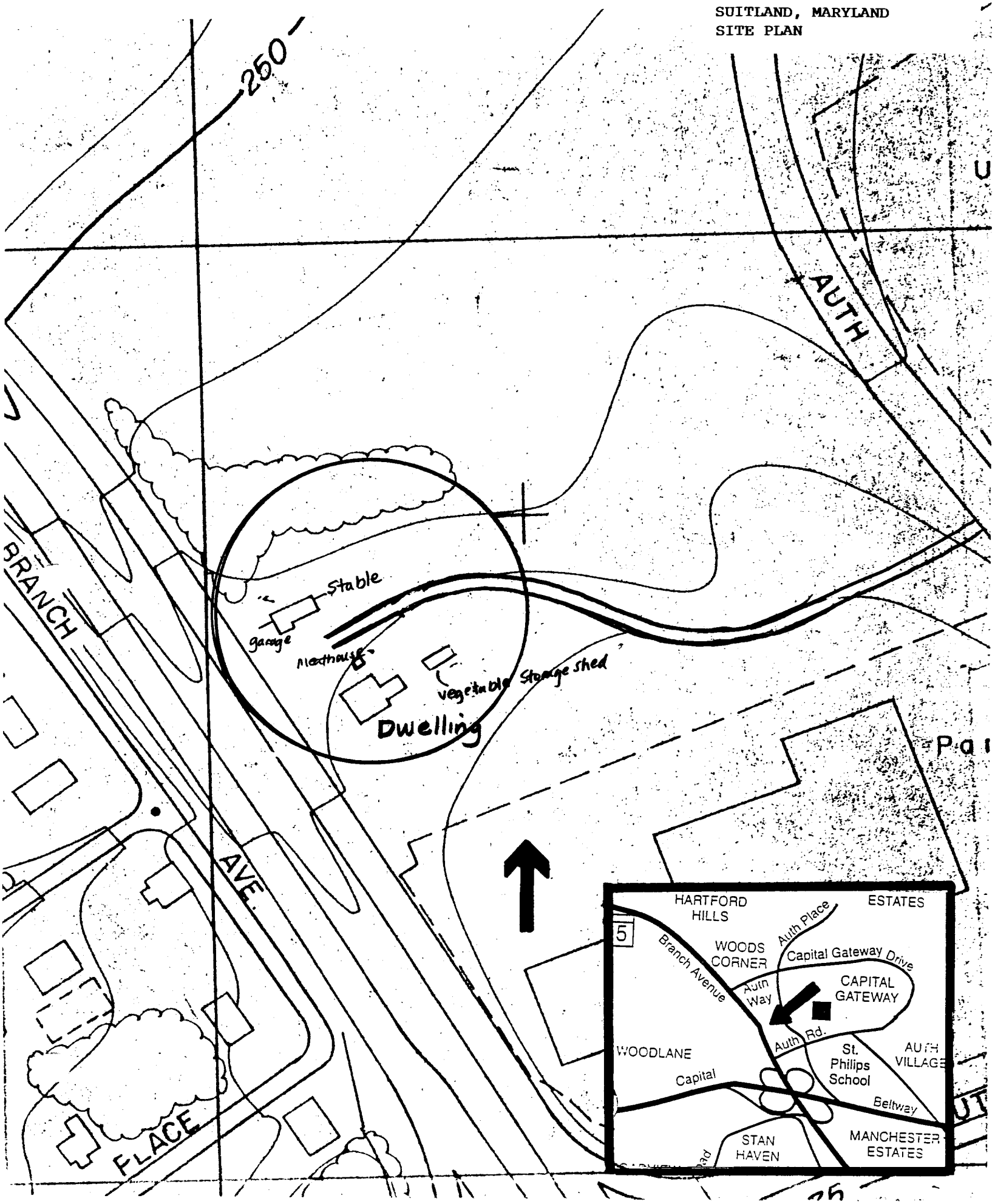
Statement of Significance

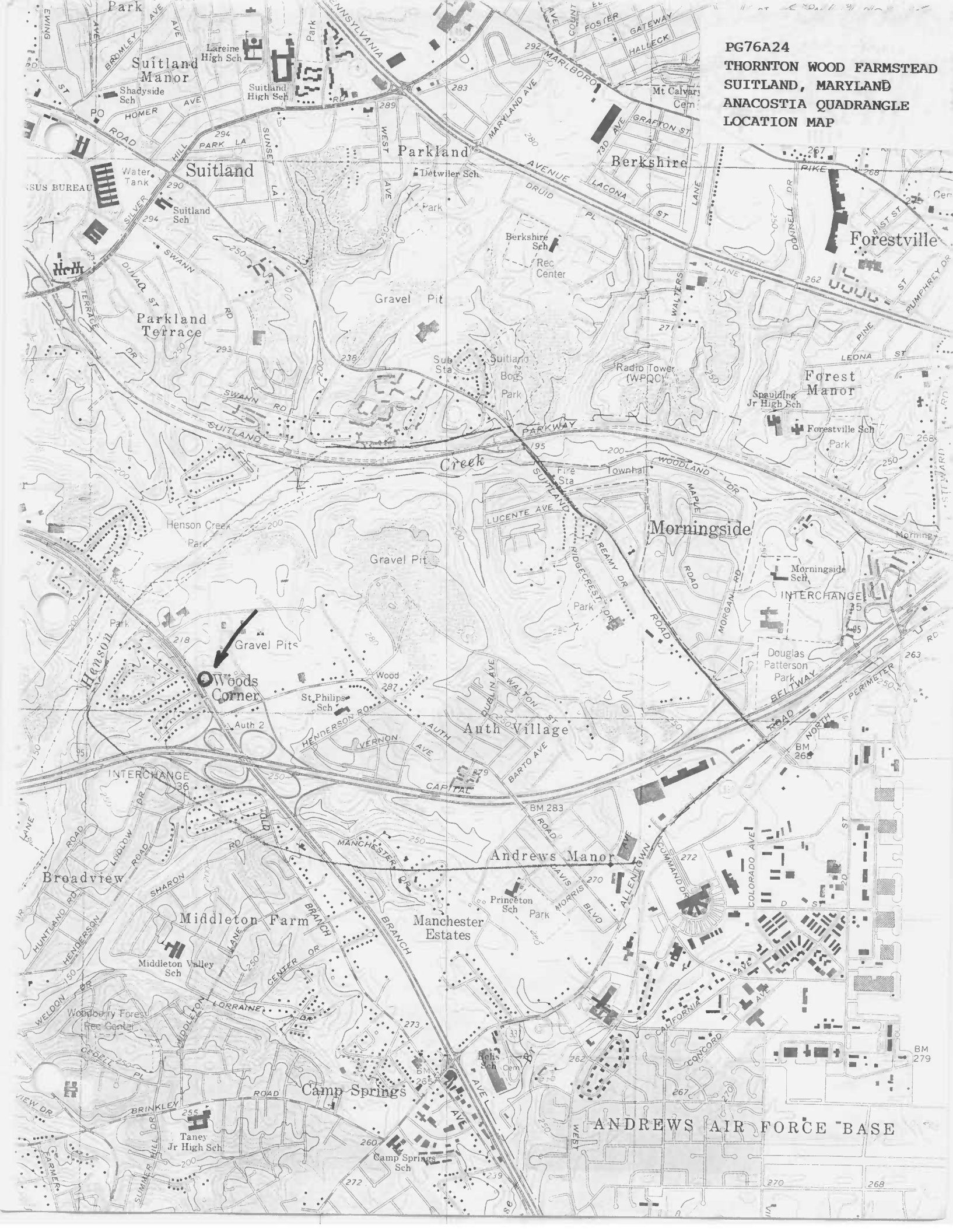
The Thornton-Wood Farmstead is a modest complex of aluminum-clad structures located at the edge of MD 5. It represents the pre-1960's use of the land in northern Prince George's County inside I-495 between MD 5 (Branch Ave) on the west and Suitland Parkway (on the north) and Suitland Road(on the east). Until the rapid commercialization of the area in recent decades the land was utilized for agriculture, with modest truck farms owned by families like the Sopers, Auths, Darceys, Woods and Ammanns. Because the Wood family operated a seasonal fruit stand, no longer extant, near the intersection of MD 5 and Auth Road, the area came to be known as Wood's Corner (the name appears for the first time on the 1946 Election District Map). The Wood family grew tomatoes, sweet peas, berries, potatoes and other crops for the District of Columbia market.

It is one dwelling of about one dozen dwellings in the area bounded by I-495 Suitland Parkway, MD 5, and Suitland Road which was constructed at least fifty years ago. This area was largely agricultural until Robert Warren Ammann started the development of speculative housing in the 1950's with "Auth Village". The ever-accelerating pace of development has resulted in the dense pattern of large commercial, educational, office and residential building complexes, which have obliterated the previous agrarian land patterns.


PG76A24
THORNTON WOOD FARMSTEAD
SUITLAND, MARYLAND
TAX MAP
P. 425
P/O P63
P. E. P. CO.
AUTH ROAD
OUTLOT A
OUTLOT B
Auth Place
S334/496 2.14A. P.27
6265/300 1.97A P.14
4139092
2.47 A P.352
M.N.C.P.&P.C. 3591/60 33.60 A. P.370
HENSON
P.E.P.CO.
THE PRICE COMPANY 6289/803 9.12A. P.477
7348
AUTH
BRITANIA
EDWARD J CONNOR,ET 5980/500 5.43A. P.482
PAR. 'K' AUTH RD. CENTER
9127
8717
AUTH RD. CENTER
125061
'R'
P.424
P.457
M.N.C.P.&P. 3830/571 2.21 A. P.446
PAR. 'D'
PAR. 'E'
'H'
8825
AUTH ROAD CENTER
8306
WAY
AUTH
AUTH ROAD CENTER
HASS INSTR. CORP. 3773/302 3.51 A. P. 440
AUTH ROAD CENTER 'P'
8524
'Q'
116068
AUTH
WAY
AUTH ROAD CENTER 'O'
A161075
P.56
0.99 A. P.58
9562
M
'R'
109066
119087
WOODLANE
00SS
'N'
'S'
LINDA V. WOOD 2484/080 6.10 A. P.257
'A'
5989
'F'
8283
112049 LOT 1
5
1773
PLACE
6105
6346
WOODS COR.
'B'
9694
9301
P. 463
MERCEDES BLVD
128244.3
407341.4
SCALE IN FEET
400 0 400 800 1200
822
PRINCE GEORGES

PG76A24
THORNTON WOOD FARMSTEAD
SUITLAND, MARYLAND
SITE PLAN




PG76A24
THORNTON WOOD FARMSTEAD
SUITLAND, MARYLAND
ANACOSTIA QUADRANGLE
LOCATION MAP
Suitland Manor
Suitland
Parkland
Berkshire
Forestville
Parkland Terrace
Forest Manor
Morningside
Henson Creek
Woods Corner
Auth Village
Andrews Manor
Broadview
Middleton Farm
Manchester Estates
Camp Springs
ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE
Suitland High Sch
Shadyside Sch
Lareine High Sch
Detwiler Sch
Suitland Sch
Berkshire Sch
Rec Center
Gravel Pit
Suitland Bog
Park
Radio Tower (WPGC)
Spaulding Jr High Sch
Forestville Sch
Townhall
Fire Sta
Sub Sta
Morningside Sch
Douglas Patterson Park
St Philips Sch
Princeton Sch
Middleton Valley Sch
Woodbourne Forest Rec Center
Taney Jr High Sch
Camp Springs Sch
Mt Calvary Cem
Beth's Sch Cem
INTERCHANGE 35
INTERCHANGE 36
BM 283
BM 268
BM 279
Suitland Parkway
Capital Beltway
Old Branch Road
Allentown Road
Auth Road
Henderson Road
Manchester Road
Dublin Ave
Walton St
Vernon Ave
Barto Ave
Ridgecrest Dr
Reamy Dr
Morgan Rd
Woodland Dr
Lucente Ave
Druid Lane
Maryland Ave
Pennsylvania Ave
Marlboro Pike
Silver Hill Road
Swann Rd
Duvall St
Terrace Dr
Park Hill Road
Sunset Lane
West Ave
Homer Ave
Bromley Ave
Foster Gateway
Halleck
Grafton St
Lacona St
Donnell Dr
Walters Lane
Pine
Leona St
Pumphrey Dr
Stewart Rd
Ewing Ave
Count Ave
Colorado Ave
California Ave
Concord Ave
Command Dr
Davis Blvd
Morris Blvd
Sharon Lane
Huntland Rd
Henderson Lane
Ludlow Road
Weldon Dr
Middleton Lorraine Dr
Center Dr
Cedell Pl
View Dr
Brinkley Road
Summer Hill Dr
Farmer Dr
Hanson
Water Tank
PO
Park
292
283
289
294
290
280
267
268
262
271
250
238
293
295
200
218
287
279
273
265
255
260
272
270
331
239
262
267
268
263
279

PG [illegible] 24

Th[illegible]

Sw[illegible]

R. C[illegible] 3/[illegible]

[illegible] Adm[illegible]

Fa[illegible]

northeast [illegible]

[illegible] MD5

1/12

PA 71 A - 24

Thornton - [illegible] Farmstead

Sweet [illegible]

Pierce Springs [illegible]

[illegible] Suffolk [illegible] 3/[illegible]

MD State [illegible]

Dwellings, S.W. Corner,

looking NE from [illegible]

Side MD 5

[illegible]

PG 11 A 24

[illegible] Wood Farmstead

[illegible]

[illegible]

R Swift [illegible]

MD State Highway [illegible]

Farmstead [illegible]

West [illegible] entrance

1/2

PG 71A 24

MD State Highway Administration

West Elevation of Dwelling

PG 71A - 24

Thornton - Wood House

Switch

PG Com

R Coffee - 3/47

MD State Hwy Admin

Dwelling

SE Corner

7/12

PG 7-A — 24

Thos. Hardwood House

Switch &

PG Co

R Suffern 3 K 7

MD State Highway

Admin

Dwelling

NE Corner

8/12

STAR-3 01569 00089