

QA-318
E. G. Benton Building
Centreville
Private

1909

The Benton Building is a pristine example of a pressed-tin commercial store front. It is the finest surviving example in Queen Anne's County of a once-popular form of architectural decoration that has all but disappeared in this region. The entire exterior of the building has remained perfectly preserved, and has recently been cleaned up and painted. Several decorative features suggest that the pressed tin front was manufactured by the Mesker Brothers Company, a St. Louis firm that is known to have manufactured the iron front of the Nationwide Insurance Agency (QA-254) in nearby Queenstown.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

E. G. Benton Building

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Northeast corner of Liberty Street and Water Street

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Queen Anne's**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

DISTRICT
 BUILDING(S)
 STRUCTURE
 SITE
 OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC
 PRIVATE
 BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
 IN PROCESS
 BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED
 UNOCCUPIED
 WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
 YES: RESTRICTED
 YES: UNRESTRICTED
 NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE MUSEUM
 COMMERCIAL PARK
 EDUCATIONAL PRIVATE RESIDENCE
 ENTERTAINMENT RELIGIOUS
 GOVERNMENT SCIENTIFIC
 INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION
 MILITARY OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Louis A. Berwanger, Jr.

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 327

CITY, TOWN

Stevensville

— VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21666**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Queen Anne's County CourthouseLiber #: CWC 140Folio #: 311

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

STATE

Maryland 21617**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

—FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

QA-318

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The E. G. Benton Building is located on the northeast corner of Liberty Street and Water Street in Centreville. The building was constructed in 1909 for Enoch George Benton, as attested by a sign incorporated into the original pressed tin cornice on the Water Street facade.

The Benton Building is a two story commercial building constructed of brick with an elaborate pressed tin store-front on the south (principal) facade. This tin-front is the primary architectural feature of the building. The building is oriented with the south gable facing Water Street, and is three bays wide and five bays deep. The south portion of the first floor has traditionally served as a shop, while the rear of the first floor and all of the second floor is used as a private residence.

The entrance to the shop is located in the center of the south facade, and is recessed back from the front wall of the building. It is flanked by large plate glass shop windows set off by smaller rectangular windows above and below. Decoration on the first floor is largely

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.1 DESCRIPTION

restricted to horizontal reeded panels above and below the shop windows.

On the second floor, there is a projecting oriel in the center bay flanked by a large one-over-one window on each side. The oriel has one one-over-one window in the front face and one on each of the splayed sides. Thin columns with stylized Ionic capitals are located at each corner of the oriel, setting off the individual windows. Panels of pressed tin that imitate rusticated stone block-work fill the voids between the oriel and the flanking windows. Bands of geometric trim are carried across the facade both above and below the second floor, terminated at each corner by projecting console brackets. These are embellished with a fleur de lis pattern, a favorite signature of the Mesker Brothers Company, a St. Louis manufacturer of decorative iron and tin front-buildings.

The cornice is dominated by more bands of decoration, the most prominent of which are a flat shell or floral pattern and a row of richly embellished ballusters. A panel at the crest of the cornice bears the name of E. G. Benton and the date 1909.

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.2 DESCRIPTION

The fleur de lis motif appears again on either side of this panel together with a stylized star burst.

The side and rear walls of the building are laid in seven course bond on a concrete foundation, and the shed-roof is pitched down from east to west. All window and door openings have rusticated jack arch lintels with keystones and stone sills. The eaves are finished with plain box cornices on both side and rear walls.

The entrance to the living quarters is located on the west facade, facing Liberty Street. It is a simple door with a single-light transom, flanked by a large two-over-two window on the left and three small single light windows on the right. These are placed high up on the first floor for increased security to the store, and reflect the division between the commercial part of the building and the residential. On the second floor, there are four large two-over-two windows. A pair of two-over-two windows on each floor are the only openings on the rear (north) wall, while on the east wall there is one two-over-two window at the north end on the first floor and three symmetrically placed on the second

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.3 DESCRIPTION

floor. One flush brick chimney is located to the left of the south bay on the east facade and a second is centered on the rear wall.

The interior was not examined.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

QA-318

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
X 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 1909

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benton Building is primarily significant as a pristine example of a pressed-tin commercial store front. It is the finest surviving example in Queen Anne's County of a once-popular form of architectural decoration that has all but disappeared in this region. The entire exterior of the building has remained perfectly preserved, and has recently been cleaned up and painted. Several decorative features suggest that the pressed tin front was manufactured by the Mesker Brothers Company, a St. Louis firm that is known to have manufactured the iron front of the Nationwide Insurance Agency (QA-254) in nearby Queenstown.

The lot on which the Benton Building stands was bought by Enoch George Benton in 1892 for \$1000. The price would certainly indicate that there was a building on the lot

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

at that time, and Mrs. Elizabeth Barton recalls that when she was a child there was a small frame building on the lot, which Mr. Benton used as a shoe store. When Benton decided to build the new building, Mr. Harry Chambers moved the old frame building across Water Street to the rear of his property. This building still stands today, facing north across Water Street. Mr. Benton then built the tin front building which bears his name, and used it for his shoe store. Enoch G. Benton died in March, 1937, and the property passed to his son, Samuel G. Benton. According to Mrs. Barton, Samuel Benton was an electrician, and used the shop for his electrical business, while living upstairs. In 1956, the building passed to Samuel's son, Earl D. Benton, and the following year it was sold to C. Carroll Barcus. In 1975 Barcus sold the property to William A. Storage, Jr., and in September 1978, Storage sold it to Louis and Helen Berwanger, the present owners.

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Orlando Ridout V, Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Queen Anne's County Historical Society

DATE

1/4/79

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Centreville

STATE

Maryland 21617

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
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

QA-318
E.G. Benton
Building

Mary McCarthy
Spring/Summer 2003
Digital color photo on file at MHT





19-E. C. BENTON-09

No Left Turn

QA-318

Benton Bldg

Centerville

OK ✓ 1978

W

119-E. C BENTON-09



QA-318

Benton Bldg
Centerville
ORV 1978

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