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CAR

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY/DISTRICT
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property/District Name: The Button Factory Survey Number: ~~CAR~~ CAR-308

Tax Parcel #: _____

Project: Feasibility Study Agency: DHCD, Town of Denton

Site visit by MHT Staff: X no ___ yes Name _____ Date _____

Eligibility recommended X Eligibility **not** recommended _____

Criteria: X B X C ___D Considerations: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G
___None

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

The Button Factory in Denton Maryland is located in downtown Denton, Caroline County, MD. It should be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

The Button Factory building was constructed ca 1933 by B. Schwanda & Sons, a New York button-manufacturing firm, as part of a corporate expansion. The main section of the building is square in plan, measuring 80', and is divided into four equal bays, each one covered by a sawtooth monitor roof. Each bay is constructed of 6" x 8" steel columns which support four light-weight triangular steel trusses. The trusses bear on 12"-deep steel channels and form the "saw tooth" monitors. Banks of steel sash with rolled glass panes extend across the three exposed elevations and provide diffuse light to the factory interior. The interior of the building retains much of the button-making equipment, along with remnants of the button blanks and unprocessed shells. The factory is eligible under Criterion C as an example of advanced inter-war industrial design adapted to a small factory in a rural community.

The Schwanda Company was founded in 1894 by Czechoslovakian Benjamin Schwanda in Czechoslovakia. By 1902, the company moved to New York and over the next three decades the company expanded significantly. The Denton plant opened between 1933 and 1936 and was one of four plants at that time. At the height of WWII, 70 or more workers were employed in Denton. The factory remained open until 1996, when only 12 workers were employed.

The Denton plant was part of the world-wide manufacturing network. Shells were "caught" in the South Pacific (Australia, Tahiti, New Guinea, Fiji,, the Celebes), purchased by Chinese dealers and sent to Denton via New York. In Denton, the shells were cleaned and processed and cut into "blanks." The blanks were circles of varying diameter and thickness which were then sent to finishing plants in New York and Connecticut. The button "holes"- left-over shells--were discarded and sometimes used to pave Denton's parking lots and alleys.

The factory was one of the two largest employers in Denton and a long source of employment in the small community. The button factory played an important role in the town's economic and social life and was identified for as a town in Maryland where "the byways are paved with buttonholes and attractive mahogany furniture is made out of old

packing crates." The Button Factory is eligible under Criterion A for its contribution to the development of the community and for its contribution to the town's identity.

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: Button Factory Feasibility Study, Town of Denton (Chapter on the National Register eligibility on file with Review and Compliance)

Prepared by: Marsha L. Fritz, Architectural Historian, July 1997

Kimberly Prothro Williams — August 18, 1997
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services — Date

NR program concurrence: X yes ___ no ___ not applicable

Peter E. Fenton — 8/19/97
Reviewer, NR program — Date