CAPSULE SUMMARY
CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Owings, Calvert County
Ca. 1935
Private

Owings Ballpark, located at 905 Fowler Road in Owings, Calvert County, is situated on the north side of Fowler Road and is approached from the east by a dirt drive. Established circa 1935 on land owned by Albert Gray, the baseball field was home to the Owings Eagles, an African-American men's baseball team. The first ballpark in the area to have field lights, Owings Ballpark continued to serve the community as an active baseball field until 2000. In the ensuing two years, informal games have continued to be played at the park, which is still owned by the Gray family. Owings Ballpark is a rare and intact example of the 1930s rural baseball park in Calvert County with particular significance to the local African-American community.

Owings Ballpark consists of a dirt baseball diamond with canvas bases pegged into place and a raised dirt pitcher's mound. It has a batting cage constructed of wood timber posts and metal wire fencing. The batting cage is connected to the perimeter fence that encircles the entire field. Electric lights on wood timber posts line the fence in the outfield. There are two one-story, shed-roof dugouts on concrete-block foundations. The wood-frame shelters are clad in plywood with rolled asphalt sheeting on the roofs. To the west of the field is a one-story, wood-frame concession stand that features weatherboard cladding and a side-gabled roof. Non-historic resources on the site include a metal trailer and metal bleachers.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1288

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	Owings Ballpark
other	

2. Location

street and number	905 Fowler Road	___	not for publication
city, town	Owings	___	vicinity
county	Calvert		

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

name	Albert Gray				
street and number	1921 Campbell Drive			telephone	301/736-6010
city, town	Suitland	state	MD	zip code	20746

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Calvert County Courthouse	tax map and parcel:	M6, P76		
city, town	Prince Frederic	liber	ABE	folio	851

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

___ Contributing Resource in National Register District
___ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
___ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
___ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
___ Recorded by HABS/HAER
___ Historic Structure Report or Research Report
___ Other _____

6. Classification

Category
___ district
___ building(s)
___ structure
X site
___ object

Ownership
___ public
X private
___ both

Current Function
___ agriculture
___ commerce/trade
___ defense
___ domestic
___ education
___ funerary
___ government
___ health care
___ industry
___ landscape
X recreation/culture
___ religion
___ social
___ transportation
___ work in progress
___ unknown
___ vacant/not in use
___ other: _____

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
1		sites
1	1	structures
		objects
5	2	Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

0

7. Description

Inventory No. CT-1288

Condition

___	excellent	___	deteriorated
___	good	___	ruins
X	fair	___	altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Owings Ballpark, opened circa 1935, is located at 905 Fowler Road in Owings, Calvert County, Maryland. Owings Ballpark consists of a dirt baseball diamond with canvas bases pegged into place and a raised dirt pitcher's mound. It has a batting cage constructed of wood timber posts and metal wire fencing. The batting cage is connected to the perimeter fence that encircles the entire field. Electric lights on wood timber posts line the fence in the outfield. There are two one-story, shed-roof dugouts on concrete-block foundations. The wood-frame shelters are clad in plywood with rolled asphalt sheeting on the roofs. To the west of the field is a one-story, wood-frame concession stand that features weatherboard cladding and a side-gabled roof. Non-historic resources on the site include a metal trailer and metal bleachers.

DESCRIPTION OF OWINGS BALLFIELD AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The baseball field itself is comprised of a grassy outfield and a dirt infield and pitchers mound with canvas bases that are pegged in place. To the rear of home plate is a batting cage that is constructed of undressed timber posts with wire fencing. Flanking the batting cage are two dugouts that were constructed circa 1940. The modest wood frame buildings, one of which lies along the first base line and the other which lies along the third base line, are identical in design, form, and scale. Each dugout rises one story in height and four bays in width and features wood frame construction. The rear walls are clad in plywood sheeting and the side walls feature plywood sheeting at the lower half. The upper half of the side walls and facades of the dugouts feature square wood post supports, with open bays between. Additionally, the dugouts have concrete block perimeter foundations, dirt floors, and shed roofs that are clad in rolled asphalt sheeting. The interiors of the dugouts are unfinished with wood benches constructed with two-by-four inch wood boards.

The concession stand is also historic, being constructed circa 1940. Currently in a dilapidated condition with the roof having fallen, the one-story, three-bay-wide wood frame building stands to the northwest of the baseball diamond. The modest concession stand is clad in lapped wood weatherboard and features sections that have been reclad with plywood sheets. There is a center entry flanked by two window openings. Both the door and windows have been removed from the building. The side-gabled roof is clad in asphalt shingles. On the west elevation, there is a wood frame addition with a shed roof.

NON-HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Owings Ballpark also features two non-historic resources: the bleachers and a 1960s trailer. The one-story, four-bay-wide trailer features aluminum cladding, a shallow-pitched gable roof, and aluminum jalousie windows. It is set on a wood and concrete block pier foundation. The bleachers are located along the third base line, adjacent to one of the dugouts. Constructed of steel frame, the bleachers feature wood benches. They are separated from the field by metal chain-link fencing, which surrounds both the infield and the outfield.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CT-1288

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
__ 1600-1699	__ agriculture	__ economics	__ health/medicine	__ performing arts
__ 1700-1799	__ archeology	__ education	__ industry	__ philospohy
__ 1800-1899	__ architecture	__ engineering	__ invention	__ politics/govemment
X 1900-1999	__ art	X entertainment/ recreation	__ landscape architecture	__ religion
__ 2000-	__ commerce		__ law	__ science
	__ communications	X ethnic heritage	__ literature	X social history
	__ community planning	__ exploration/ settlement	__ maritime industry	__ transportation
	__ conservation		__ military	__ other:

Specific dates	c1935; 2000	**Architect/Builder**	Unknown
Construction dates	c1935; c1940		

Evaluation for:

_____ National Register _____ Maryland Register X not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

Owings Ballpark, located at 905 Fowler Road in Owings, Calvert County, is situated on the north side of Fowler Road and is approached from the east by a dirt drive. Established circa 1935 on land owned by Albert Gray, the baseball field was home to the Owings Eagles, an African-American men's baseball team. The first ballpark in the area to have field lights, Owings Ballpark continued to serve the community as an active baseball field until 2000. In the ensuing two years, informal games have continued to be played at the park, which is still owned by the Gray family. Owings Ballpark is a rare and intact example of the 1930s rural baseball park in Calvert County with particular significance to the local African-American community.

HISTORY OF OWINGS BALLPARK

Baseball parks have traditionally served as an important meeting place for Calvert County residents. As early as the late 19th century, Calvert County residents were playing the game of baseball almost to the complete exclusion of any other team sport, and, by the turn of the 20th century, virtually every community hosted their own local team. (1) When asked about the popularity of baseball, Waters Ross hypothesized that it was due to the fact that in contrast to other team sports such as football, very little equipment was needed other than a ball, a proper mitt for the catcher and maybe the first baseman, who might also substitute a proper glove with a common work glove, and a bat. (2) Baseball teams during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were formed informally by the men of a community and initially played on "resting" agricultural fields, fields that were lying fallow for the season. (3) The baseball season in Calvert County ran from April until early October. Team membership was inconsistent, with members playing according to their availability. Each team, however, would have a core of two or three key players who would be well known to the local community and closely identified with the team. (4) Calvert County teams, particularly those in towns located on the Patuxent River side of the county, would often play teams from St. Mary's County, across the Patuxent River, and in some cases, players from St. Mary's County would come over on boats for games. Teams were racially segregated for most of the 20th century, although white and African-American teams would often play one another.

By the second quarter of the 20th century, community baseball teams began to play on baseball fields specifically designated for that purpose by private landowners or those purchased by the baseball teams, themselves. One of the better known baseball fields in Calvert County was Grover's Field (CT-1285), named for Calvert County baseball great Garner T. "Pete," Grover. Located in St. Leonard, Grover's Field was likely established with the purchase of an approximately twenty-seven-acre parcel of land on Calvert Beach Road by Sherbert Dowell and Garner Grover in 1937. (5)

A short distance from the village of Owings is another ball field traditionally associated with the African-American team, the Owings Eagles. Owings Ballpark was created following the purchase of four acres of land by Albert Gray in 1935, who built his home on the parcel fronting the road. (6) Albert Gray and his son, Lawrence, played on the Owings Eagles team. Gray made many improvements to the park during the 1940s including the construction of a small, one-room concession stand, now in ruins, and the

installation of lights in 1947, a first at the time in Calvert County. (7) Original elements of the ballpark can be seen in the light poles, the fencing along the road, and the batting cage.

The Owings Eagles regularly played teams from the area, both white and African-American, and on at least one occasion, an African-American professional team from Baltimore called the Baltimore E-light Giants. (8) The ballpark hosted the Owings Eagles until 2000, and has since been used sporadically for informal games. (9)

Beginning in the early 1940s, William B. "Buddy" King recalls being responsible, along with his brother, for mowing the ballfield. They mowed the park with a sickle-bar mover towed behind a team of horses. The work was done once a week in rainy seasons and maybe every other week during other seasons of the year, early every Saturday morning. King and his brother mowed the ballfield until the early 1950s. Albert Gray, the owner of the ballfield, would purchase chickens and garden produce from Mrs. King (Buddy King's mother) to serve to patrons of the ballpark.

Notes from a conversation with Buddy King show the excitement of the activities of the ballfield and the community involvement:

"Once in a while a player would hit a ball across the road (to Posey farm on Fowler Road), 'then we'd have ourselves a baseball.' Buddy said that the game-going crowd was 'really something.' They'd come all dressed up, and cheer and yell and blow their horns. The smell of the good food wafted through the neighborhood. The teams (including the Owings Eagles) would play into the twilight sometimes (they added lights to the field in 'later years'). They played on Saturdays and Sundays. He said that the field 'is sort of rundown now' but 'when Albert Gray was alive, it was real nice' and that Gray 'ran it right.'"(10)

CHAIN OF TITLE

October 15, 1935: Alexander Wilkerson and Mazora Wilkerson to Albert Gray
Land Records of Calvert County
Liber AAH 34 Folio 311

April 11, 1988: Estate of Albert Eugene Gray to Oscar J. Gray, Kenneth Gray, Christopher Gray, Leroy Gray, Dorothea Gray, and Talbot Gray
Land Records of Calvert County
Liber ABE 436 Folio 851

ENDNOTES

1. Waters Ross, interview by Carrie E. Albee, Mutual, Maryland, June 13, 2002.
2. Ross, June 13, 2002.
3. Waters Ross, "Baseball In Southern Calvert County in 1901-1902," Baseball, Vertical Files, Calvert County Historical Society, Prince Frederick, MD.
4. Ross, June 13, 2002.
5. Calvert County Land Records, Liber AAH 38, Folio 58, Calvert County Courthouse, Prince Frederick, MD.
6. Lawrence Gray, telephone interview by Carrie E. Albee, May 28, 2002.
7. Gray.
8. Gray.
9. Gray.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No CT-1288

Name Owings Ballpark

Continuation Sheet
Number 8 Page 2

10. William B. 'Buddy' King interview with staff of the Calvert County Office of Planning, June 30, 2002.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CT-1288

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	4.0 Acres		
Acreage of historical setting	4.0 Acres		
Quadrangle name	North Beach	Quadrangle scale	1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

Owings Ballpark has been associated with Parcel 76, as denoted on Tax Map 6, since it was laid out circa 1935.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	R. Weidlich and C. Albee, Architectural Historians		
organization	E.H.T. Traceries, Inc.	dat	8/26/02
street and number	1121 Fifth Street, N.W.	telephone	202/393-1199
city or town	Washington	stat DC	zip code 20001

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties 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
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

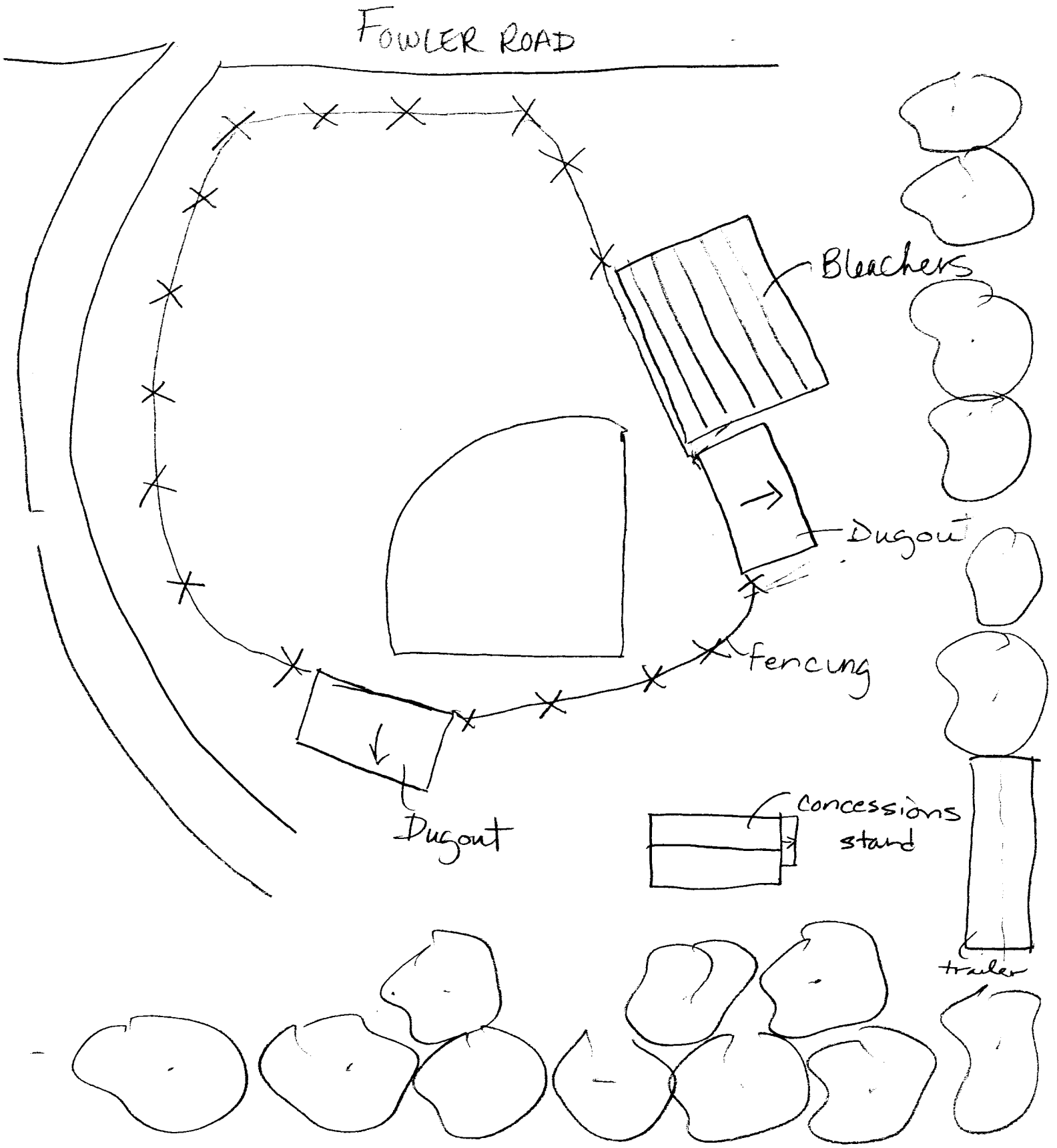
Inventory No. CT-1288

Name Owings Ballpark
Continuation Sheet
Number 9 Page 1

Gray, Lawrence, Telephone interview by Carrie E. Albee, May 28, 2002.

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP
CT-1288
OWINGS BALLPARK
905 FOWLER RD, OWINGS, CALVERT COUNTY, MD

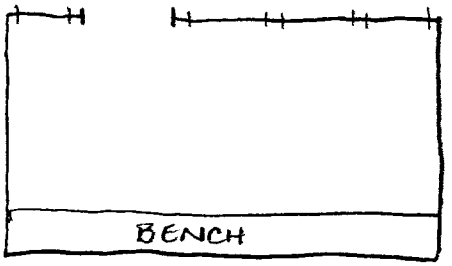
N↓



CT-1288
OWINGS BALLPARK
905 FOWLER ROAD
OWINGS, CALVERT COUNTY, MD

DUGOUT, FIRST FLOOR
NOT DRAWN TO SCALE
MAY 2002

N

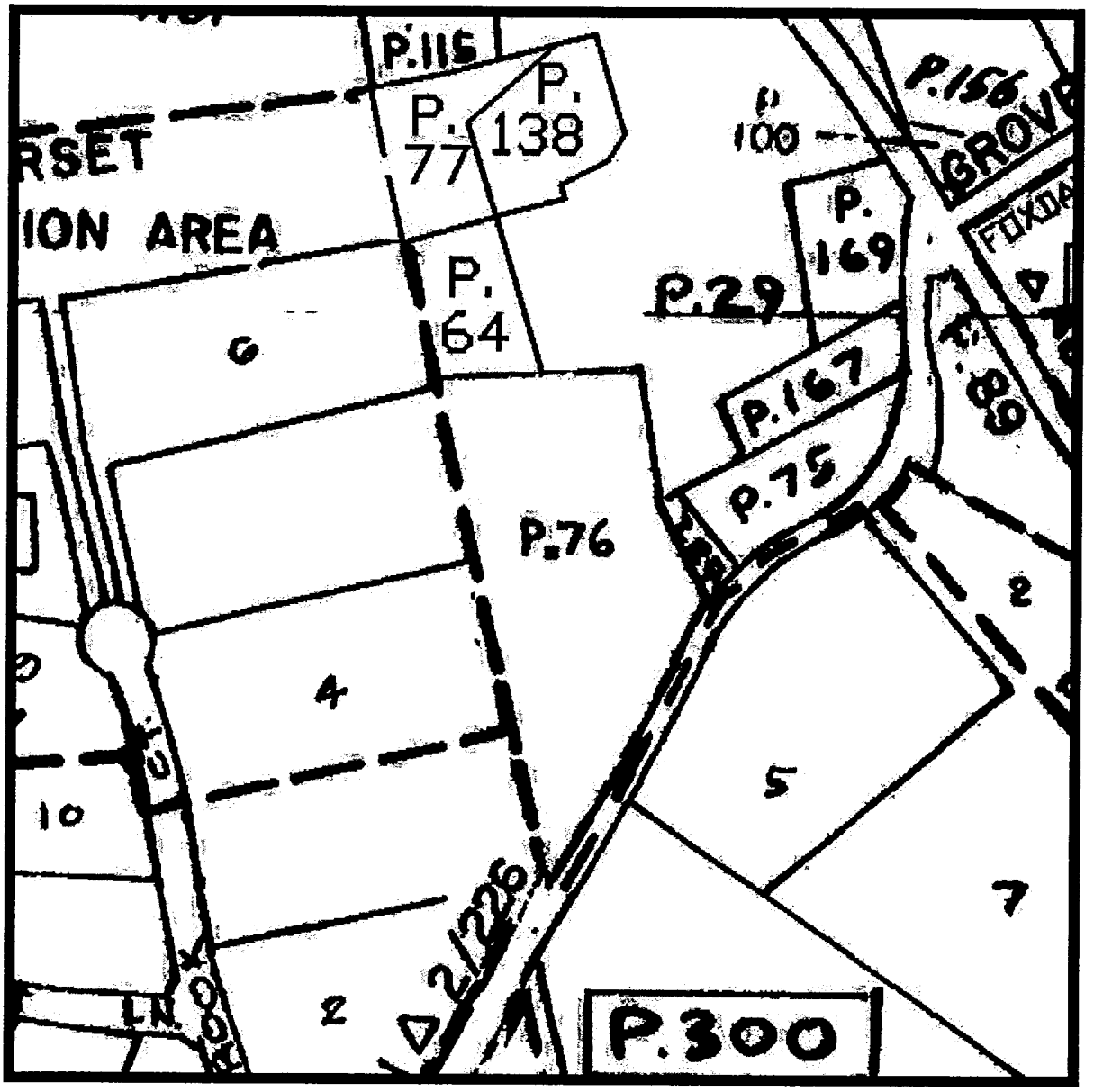


CT-1288

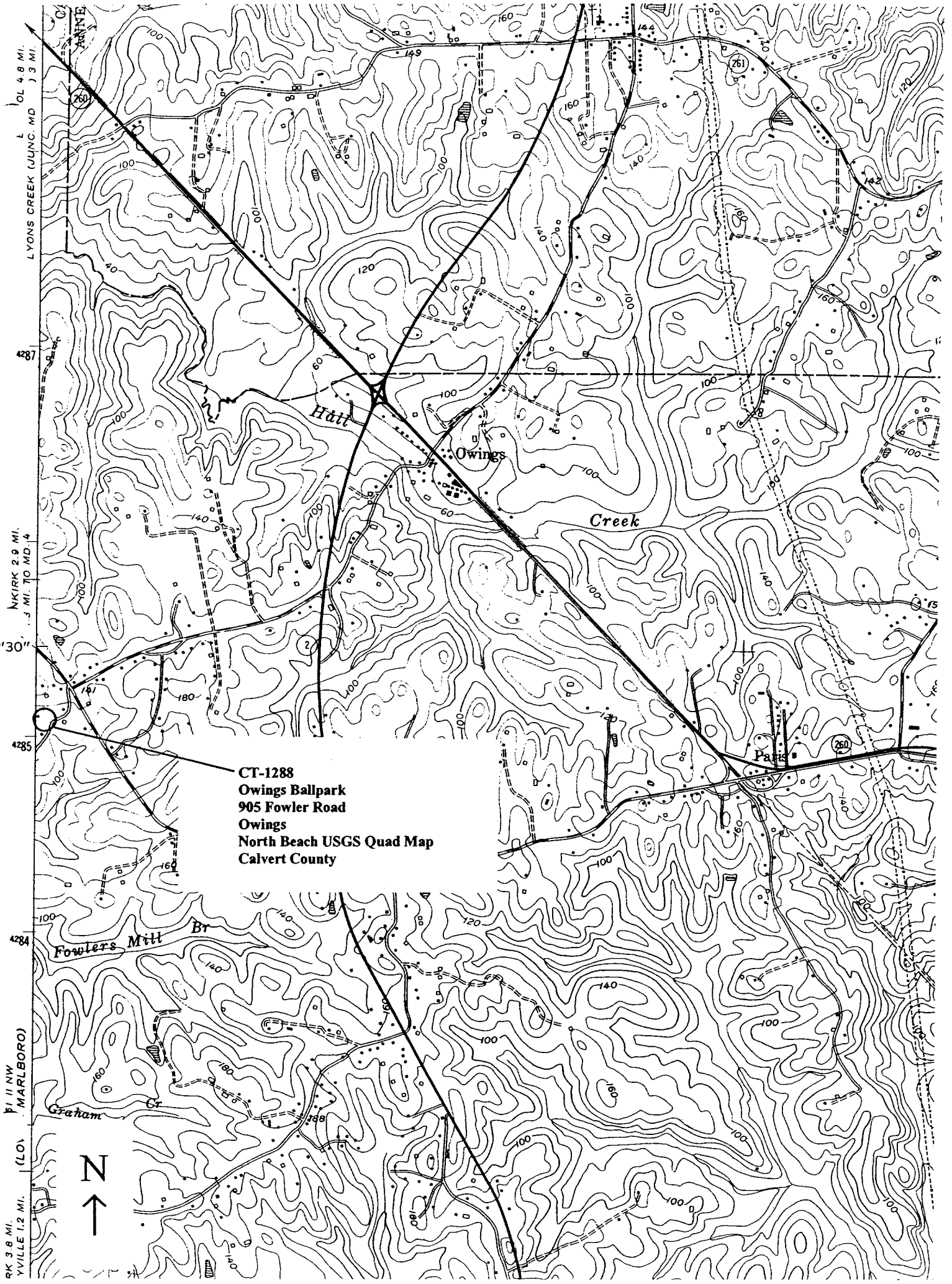
Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation
CALVERT COUNTY
Real Property Data Search

Go Back
View Map
New Search

District - 03 **Account Number** - 007189

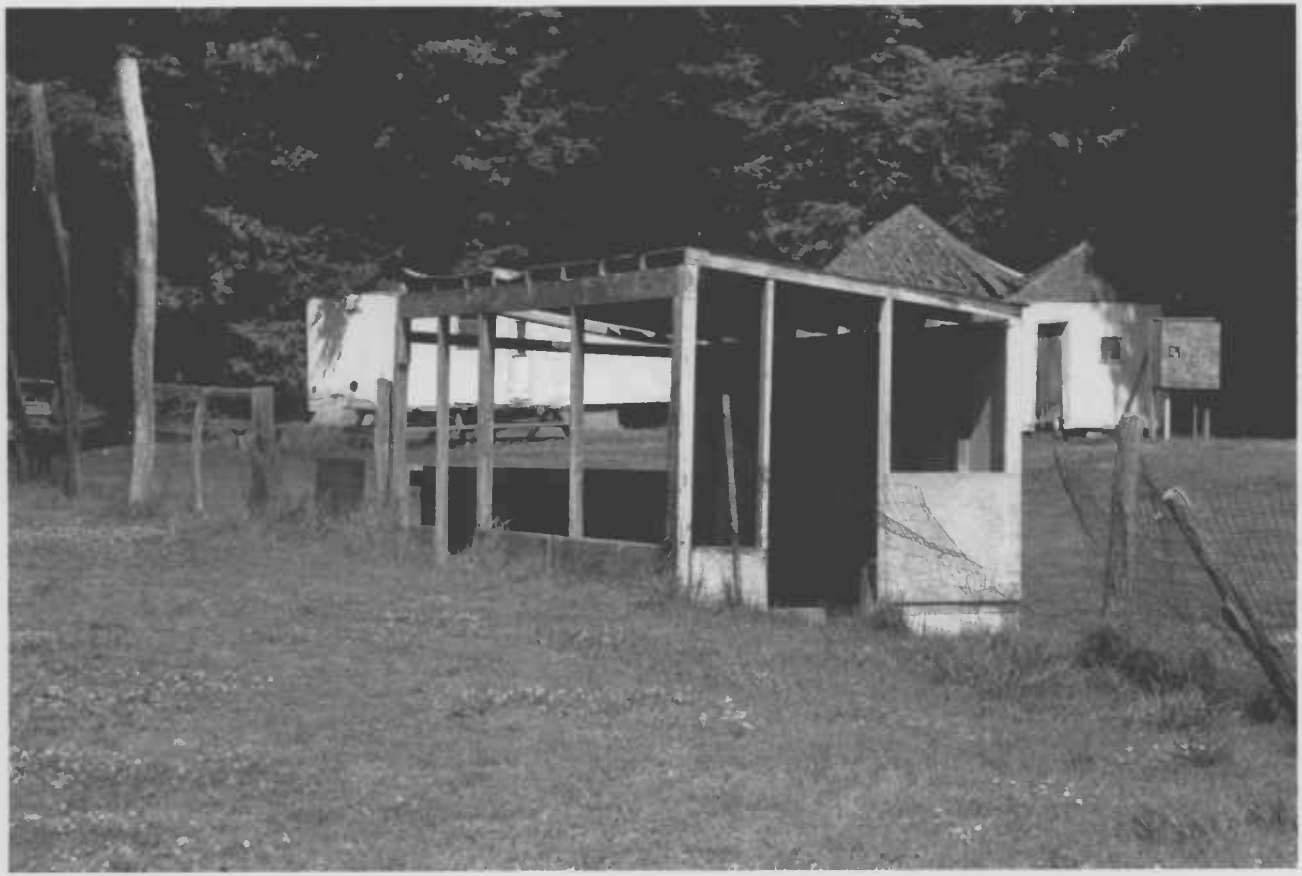


Property maps provided courtesy of the Maryland Department of Planning ©2001.
For more information on electronic mapping applications, visit the Maryland Department of Planning web site at www.mdp.state.md.us


CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Owings
North Beach USGS Quad Map
Calvert County
Owings
Hall
Creek
Paris
Fowlers Mill Br
Graham Cr
LYONS CREEK (JUNC. MD
NKIRK 2.9 MI.
42'30"
MARLBORO)
N

CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Calvert County, MD
EHT Traceries
May 2002
Maryland SHPO
Ballpark, Looking NW

1 of 7

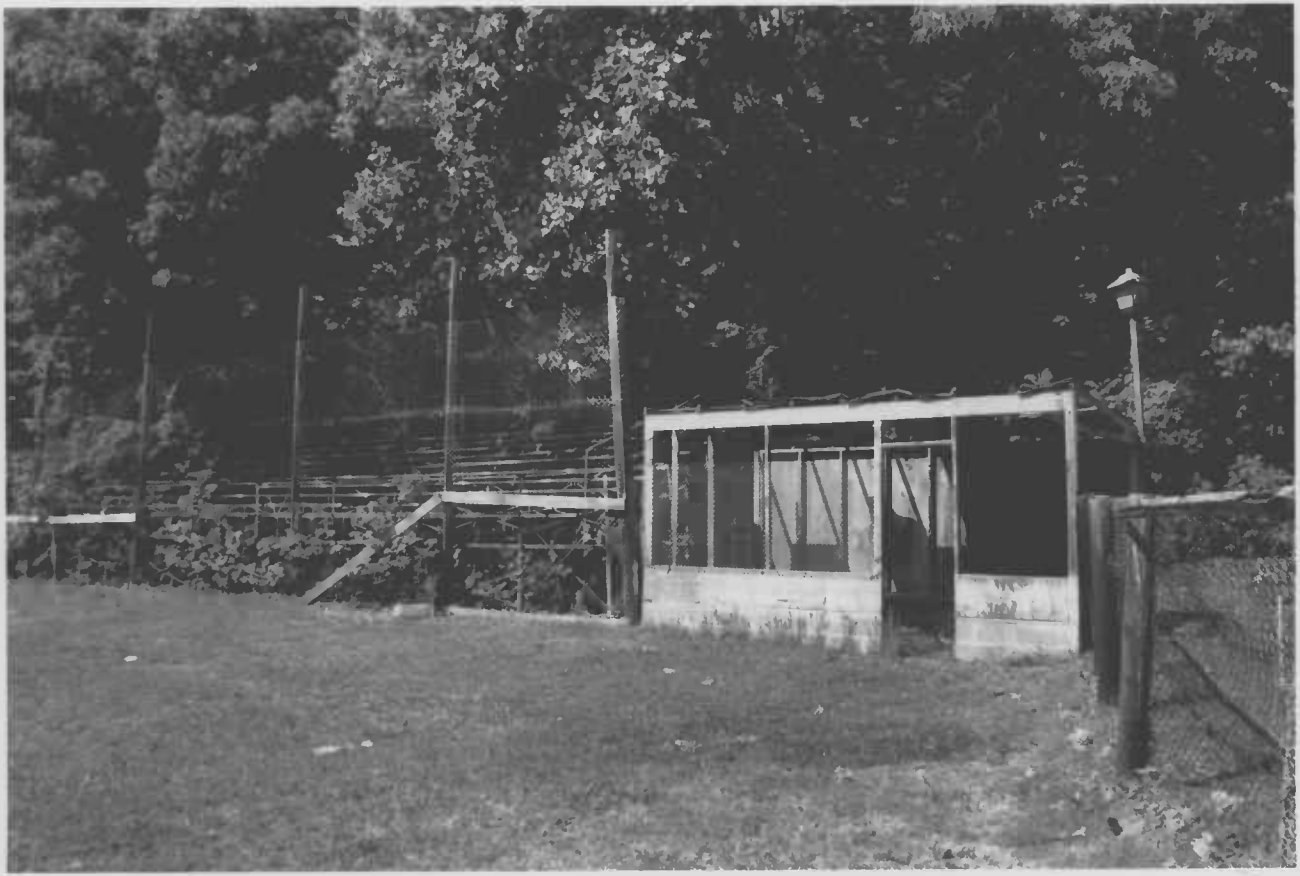


CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Calvert County, MD
EHT Traceries
May 2002
Maryland SHPO
Dugout, SE Corner, Looking NW
2 OF 7

CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Calvert County, MD
EHT Traceries
May 2002
Maryland SHPO
Dugout, NW Corner, Looking SE

3 OF 7

CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Calvert County, MD
EHT Traceries
May 2002
Maryland SHPO
Dugout, Interior, Looking NW
4 OF 7



CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Calvert County, MD
EHT Traceries
May 2002
Maryland SHPO
Dugout and Bleachers, Looking Southwest

5 of 7

CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Calvert County, MD
EHT Traceries
May 2002
Maryland SHPO
Dugout and Bleachers, Looking Southeast

6 OF 7

CT-1288
Owings Ballpark
905 Fowler Road
Calvert County, MD
EHT Traceries
May 2002
Maryland SHPO
Concession Stand, South Elevation, Looking North

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