CAPSULE SUMMARY
Forest Hills Motel (PG:79-76)
2901 Crain Highway, Prince George's County

Constructed between 1945 and 1950, the Forest Hills Motel is one of seven motels surveyed as part of the Maryland 301 Transportation Corridor Survey. It is characteristic of the Colonial Revival style motels built along Crain Highway in the middle of the 20th century. Typical of many of the motels studied, the motel has a central office pavilion flanked by one-story wings, containing modest motel rooms. Characteristic of the period, the rooms were constructed in a continuous row with individual parking spaces directly to the front of the room. The Rust family operated the motel, which continues to serve this purpose, until 1963.

The motel is one-story high, and thirty-three bays wide. Although not a high-style example, the motel exhibits characteristics of the Colonial Revival style. The motel is constructed as two sections, which are connected at an obtuse angle by a continuous porch. It appears that this had been designed originally as a typical U-shaped motel, with three sections linked by a common porch facing a central parking area; however, only the center and south (left) sections were built. The south section is set at a diagonal to the main part of the building, where the office is located, and functions as a wing. The foundation and walls of the motel are constructed of 6-course Flemish bond brick. The porch is punctuated by a projecting center gable on each of the two elevations facing the interior parking area. A cross gable, asphalt shingle roof covers the building, and an exterior rear chimney is located at the rear. The motel is set on a level, grassy lot on the west side of the highway, with mature trees, shrubs, and landscaping.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. PG: 79-76

1. Name of Property

historic name Forest Hills Motel
common/other name

2. Location

street & number 2901 Crain Highway, SW not for publication
city or town Upper Marlboro vicinity state Maryland code MD
county Prince George's County code 33 zip code

3. State/Federal Agency Certification N/A

4. National Park Service Certification N/A

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

X private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

X building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
2	1	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?
Yes Name of Listing
No X

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Hotel

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Solid: Brick
Roof Gable: Asphalt Shingle
Walls Masonry: Brick
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

__X__ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

____ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

__X__ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance 1945-1963

Significant Dates 1945

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation Undefined

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Beecher, Mary Ann. " The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications." In *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, edited by Jan Jennings, Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press for the Society for Commercial Archeology, 1990.

Brown, Jack D., et. al. *Charles County Maryland: A History*. New Jersey: Custombook, Inc., 1976.

Carley, Rachel. *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

Charles County Land and Will Records. Charles County Courthouse and the Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.

Jakle, John A., Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers. *The Motel in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Margolies, John. *Home Away From Home: Motels in America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

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" Postcards from Americana." www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/card.html, accessed 22 November 1999.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Rivoire, J. Richard. *Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland*. Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, 1990.

Watson, James Douglas. *Prince George's County Past and Present*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Lithograph Co., 1962.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 3 acres

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property at 2901 Crain Highway, SW is designated as Subdivision 1450, Grid C3 as indicated on Map 85.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The building at 2901 Crain Highway, SW has historically been associated with Subdivision 1450 since its construction circa 1940.

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11. Form Prepared By

==========

name/title R. Weidlich and C. Novelli, Architectural Historians revised by L. Trieschmann (July 8, 2000)
organization EHT Traceries, Inc. date February 29, 2000
street & number 5420 Western Avenue telephone 301/656-5283
city or town Chevy Chase state MD zip code 20815

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12. Property Owner

==========

name Amish, Inc.
street & number 2901 Crain Highway, SW telephone
city or town Upper Marlboro state MD zip code 20772

Built between 1945 and 1950, the motel at 2901 Crain Highway is one-story high, and thirty-three bays wide. Although not a high-style example, the motel exhibits characteristics of the Colonial Revival style. The motel is constructed as two sections, which are connected at an obtuse angle by a continuous porch. It appears that this had been designed originally as a typical U-shaped motel, with three sections linked by a common porch facing a central parking area; however, only the center and south (left) sections were built. The south section is set at a diagonal to the main part of the building, where the office is located, and functions as a wing. The foundation and walls of the motel are constructed of 6-course Flemish bond brick. The porch is punctuated by a projecting center gable on each of the two elevations facing the interior parking area. A cross gable, asphalt shingle roof covers the building, and an exterior rear chimney is located at the rear. The motel at 2901 Crain Highway, SW is set on a level, grassy lot on the west side of the highway, with mature trees, shrubs, and landscaping. A paved parking area adjoins the building on the east side.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The façade is bent, comprising the east and northeast sides of the building, which face the parking area. It is thirty-three bays wide, and features a continuous twenty-eight bay wide porch with square wood post supports. Except for the portion of the motel housing the office, the window and door openings are arranged in an alternating sequence of paired windows and paired doors. There are nineteen 2/2 horizontal-sash metal windows, and thirteen single-leaf slab wood doors. Also on the façade are a fixed metal 1-light window, and two single-leaf slab doors with lights. The projecting center gable above the office has a 6-light oculus and is supported by two square wood post supports; the center gable on the wing is smaller, and has no openings.

The north elevation, or far right side, of the motel is one bay wide, and has no windows or doors. The gable on this end is clad with weatherboard siding.

The rear, or west and southwest elevations, contains a large ell which projects from the back of the main part of the building, behind the office. This features an exterior rear brick chimney laid in stretcher bond. A one-story shed roof addition has been

built onto the south side of this ell. The rear of the motel is articulated by twenty-nine 2/2 horizontal-sash metal windows, which are arranged in a sequence of two large windows alternating with two small windows. The back elevation of the shed-roof addition is marked by two 6/6 adjoining vinyl windows.

The southeast elevation, or far left side, of the motel is one bay wide, and has no windows or doors. The gable on this end is clad with weatherboard siding.

SUPPORTING BUILDINGS:

A laundry and a garage are located behind the motel. Both of these buildings are one story in height. They are constructed of wood frame with roofs clad in asphalt shingles. The laundry was built in the 1950s, and is three bays wide. It features vertical board siding, and a cross gable roof. The garage, built in the 1970s, is one bay wide and features texture vertical siding and aside gable roof.

Constructed between 1945 and 1950, the Forest Hills Motel is one of seven motels surveyed as part of the Maryland 301 Transportation Corridor Survey. It is characteristic of the Colonial Revival style motels built along Crain Highway in the middle of the 20th century. Typical of many of the motels studied, the motel has a central office pavilion flanked by one-story wings, containing modest motel rooms. Characteristic of the period, the rooms were constructed in a continuous row with individual parking spaces directly to the front of the room. The Rust family operated the motel, which continues to serve this purpose, until 1963.

Motel History

The introduction of the automobile led to the public's fascination with touring and convenient accommodations soon began to develop across the country for this touring public. Originally referred to as cabin camps or tourist camps, these accommodations became known as auto courts, tourist courts, motor hotels, motor lodges, autel, and most commonly as motels. Motels, like hotels provided lodging for travelers, however, the motel was typically located along a highway and provided the motorist with direct access to individual parking spaces. The number of roadside motels along America's highways increased from six hundred to more than forty thousand between the late 1920s and the 1950s.[1]

Predating the motel were other forms of roadside accommodations that were spawned by the automobile. They often consisted of free campgrounds with parking and community restrooms. Hoping to encourage a higher class of clientele, the owners of the campgrounds began to erect

1 Mary Ann Beecher, "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications," *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, edited by Jan Jennings. (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press for the Society for Commercial Archeology, 1990), p. 115.

low-cost cabins. These cabins, the precursor of the modern motel, provided the tourist with comfort, convenience, and privacy. However, the tourist was often expected to provide his own provisions. "At the U-Smile Cabin Camp...arriving guests signed the registry and then paid their money. A cabin without a mattress rented for one dollar; a mattress for two people cost an extra twenty-five cents, and blankets, sheets and pillows another fifty cents. Each guest was given a bucket of water from an outside hydrant, along with a scuttle of firewood in the winter."[2] By the late 1920s, camp cabins became more modernized, with hopes to attract more tourists, thus evolving into motels. Typically, the motels were operated by the owners of gas stations, grocery stores, or food stands. The first motel opened December 12, 1925 in San Luis Obispo, California. James Vail's Motel Inn, with accommodations for 160 guests, was located on one of the busiest U.S. motor routes.[3]

Although the Depression was very destructive to the hotel industry, the motel industry thrived because Americans continued to vacation by automobile. The small, independently owned, owner managed motel, also referred to as mom-and-pop operations, dominated the motel industry in this period. The resulting competition helped raise the standards of the entire motel industry. New motel development leveled off during the early 1940s, however as gasoline rationing during World War II limited the number of tourists on the roads. Following the war, prosperity prompted the new construction of small-scale, individually owned motels. In fact, many returning veterans entered into the lucrative motel business that was springing up along America's highways. A 1946 manual, funded by the Veterans' Administration, touted the prospects of opening a roadside motel, but also warned of the difficulties it involved. The manual stated, "The operation of a successful motor court takes hard work, 7 days a week, the year round. This endeavor should not be viewed as one where it is possible to sit in the sun by the side of the road and ring a cash register."[4] The motels of the 1940s and early 1950s were often small in scale with an average

2 "Postcards from Americana: Cabin Camps and Cottage Courts," www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/card.html, accessed 22 November 1999.

3 *The People's Chronology* is licensed from Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright © 1995, 1996 by James Trager. All rights reserved.

4 John Margolies, *Home Away From Home: Motels in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 90.

of only twenty-five rooms.

In the late 1950s and the 1960s, motel construction boomed. These motels no longer took the form of individual cottages, but took the form of fully integrated buildings under a single roof.[5] Corporate chains with systemized and centralized operations brought an end to the individually operated motel during the 1950s.[6] Local builder Kemmons Wilson erected a motel with a community swimming pool, and air conditioning and a television set in every room. Additional provisions included free ice, free baby cribs, free kennels and dog food for family pets, and no charge for children under 12 who shared their parents' accommodations. In 1951, Wilson decided that the motel business was "the greatest untouched industry in America" and opened the first Holiday Inn on U.S. 70 in Memphis, Tennessee the following year. He went into partnership in 1953 with builder Wallace E. Johnson to found the motel chain.[7] By 1964, there were at least 61,000 motels in the country.[8]

During the period between 1930 and 1955, motel design and construction were regularly featured in builders' journals and architectural publications. Although vastly outnumbered by domestic designs, both sources printed plans and photographs of motel units and site plans of their overall organization with some regularity. While there was little discussion of style, the exterior appearances and landscaping of the motels was emphasized in order to attract the passing tourist. Originally, nearly all of the motel units were freestanding with the covered gasoline station as the focal point. During this period, most motels consisted of small cottages, often interconnected by covered parking places. Covered parking spaces were later walled in to provide additional rooms, resulting in the single-story, continuous row motel form. Moreover, it was more economical to join the rooms in a continuous row. Rather than having to provide individual heating, electricity, and plumbing for each cabin, the joined rooms could

5 "Postcards from Americana: Motor Courts, Inns, and Highway Hotels," www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/card.html, accessed 22 November 1999.

6 Beecher, p. 116.

7 *The People's Chronology* is licensed from Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright © 1995, 1996 by James Trager. All rights reserved.

8 John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 45.

share mechanical and electrical systems. As the exterior designs became more elaborate, so did the interior spaces. The interiors of the early units were single-spaced and small with little ornamentation. The units often included combined living rooms, sleeping rooms and kitchenettes. However, by the 1950s, motels began to eliminate kitchenettes from the plans because of the addition of restaurants in or near the motels.[9]

The motels of the 1940s and 1950s had relatively few amenities. "Fewer than 6 percent of all motels had pools; fewer than 8 percent had restaurants, even within walking distance; fewer than 20 percent had room phones; and fewer than 28 percent had any carpeting on the floors of the rooms. There would be a very small registration area, but there were few lobbies, lounges and meeting rooms."[10] The basic unit shapes remained primarily the same since the 1940s and single row layouts continued to be popular for their economy. However, in the late 1950s and 1960s, the one-story buildings gave way to two- and three-story buildings, blurring the distinction between the motel and the hotel. In fact, these multi-story buildings resembled hotels much more than the motor courts that they replaced. The motels of the 1960s contained between 150 and 300 rooms, which were most often arranged back-to-back along a central utility core. These larger motels also provided many amenities that their predecessors lacked, including swimming pools, bars, restaurants, coffee shops, meeting rooms, lobbies, and telephone switchboard service. The aim of the motel proprietors was to provide the traveling guest with the amenities and comforts of a downtown hotel with the convenience of being located along the interstate.[11]

Motels tended to be more utilitarian in nature than a palette of architectural expression. There were six main stylistic trends used in motel construction between 1930 and 1955. These styles were rooted in the popular housing forms and were seen on domestic buildings in the trade literature of the times. The motels most frequently exhibited features of the Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Modern styles. Other themes seen in motel construction were the rustic aesthetic theme and those based on the western style ranch house, while others were simply MARYLAND

9 Beecher, pp. 115-117.
10 *Home Away From Home: Motels in America*, pp. 91-92.
11 *Home Away From Home: Motels in America*, pp. 95-96.

vernacular.[12] There were even thematic representations, but for the most part, the buildings were one-story, relatively nondescript, interconnected lines of rooms. "Owners employed stucco, adobe, stone, brick, whatever was handy, to attract guests."[13] One of the main attractions which was used to differentiate one motel from the other was the use of elaborate signage. "Motor courts began to sport giant signs that dominated the motel grounds visually. The sign, with its elaborate neon display, was intended to provide a vertical dimension to an otherwise low-to-the-ground building configuration."[14] The signs, typically located by the side of the highway at the motel's entrance, advertised the amenities and services available for the traveler.

Motel History along US 301 Corridor

The greatest increase in commercial development along U.S. 301 was seen in the years following World War II. This was a result of the expansion of Route 301 across the Potomac River. "Motels and restaurants sprang up to accommodate tourists, sportsmen and others who passed through or stopped in Charles County."[15] This same expansion took place in Prince George's County, providing travelers with accommodations as they traveled from New York to Florida. The 1949 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland indicates one such enterprise. The Marlboro Hotel was located along Crain Highway near Main Street and consisted of the motel, a restaurant, an office and an auto sales building. Nearby amenities included another restaurant, a movie theater, a filling station and an auto repair and service station. By 1958, there were a total of 43 establishments in Prince George's County that provided hotel, motel, or trailer park services. Road maps also promoted the motel trade along U.S. 301, attracting tourist with advertisements touting such places as Waldorf of the Highways, a 90-unit motor court and restaurant with an Olympic size swimming pool. The tourist trade and commercial transportation networks relied heavily upon these services as they traversed the highways of the nation and numerous examples continue to dot the landscape of Prince George's and Charles Counties.

12 Beecher, pp. 117-120.
13 "Postcards from Americana: Motor Courts, Inns, and Highway Hotels."
14 Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, p.47.
15 Jack D. Brown, et. al., *Charles County Maryland: A History*, (New Jersey: Custombook, Inc., 1976), p. 66.

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Building History

The Forest Hills Motel was constructed on two parcels of land. The first parcel, on which the motel was constructed, was owned by Robert B. Swanson, whose heirs sold it in 1953 to Diedrich and Anne Rust. The Rusts sold the property in 1963. Despite the sale, the property has continued to function as the Forest Hills Motel.

National Register Evaluation:

All of the essential physical features are present and visible to properly represent its significance within the thematic context of Motels on the US 301 Corridor. The building is one of only a few Colonial Revival style motel complexes remaining along this highly traveled commercial corridor, and stands as a final representative of the thousands of motel courts erected during the mid- to late 20th century. Continuing to serve as a motel, the property retains integrity of design, location, setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling.

Thus, the Forest Hills Motel has been determined eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C. Within the thematic study of transportation-related resources along the US 301 Corridor, the motel would then be a contributing resource and potentially eligible under criterion A.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Eligibility recommended X Not Recommended _____

Comments:

Review, OPS: [signature] Date: 10/25/00

Reviewer, NR Program: [signature] Date: 11/3/00

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. PG: 79-76

Forest Hills Motel
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

==========

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period (s):

Modern Period (1930-present)

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):

Architecture, Landscape, and
Community Planning
Commerce

RESOURCE TYPE(S)

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s): DOMESTIC/Hotel

Known Design Source: Unknown

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Chain of Title:

Parcel 1

November 18, 1936: A. Gwynn Bowie to Robert B. Swanson
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 464 Folio 281

May 4, 1953: Jessie M. Swanson to United Sales Corporation
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 1605 Folio 36

June 3, 1953: United Sales Corporation to Diedrich and Anne Rust
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 1614 Folio 552

Parcel 2

April 10, 1961: J. Stanley Wilburn to M. Leo Storch
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 2546 Folio 21

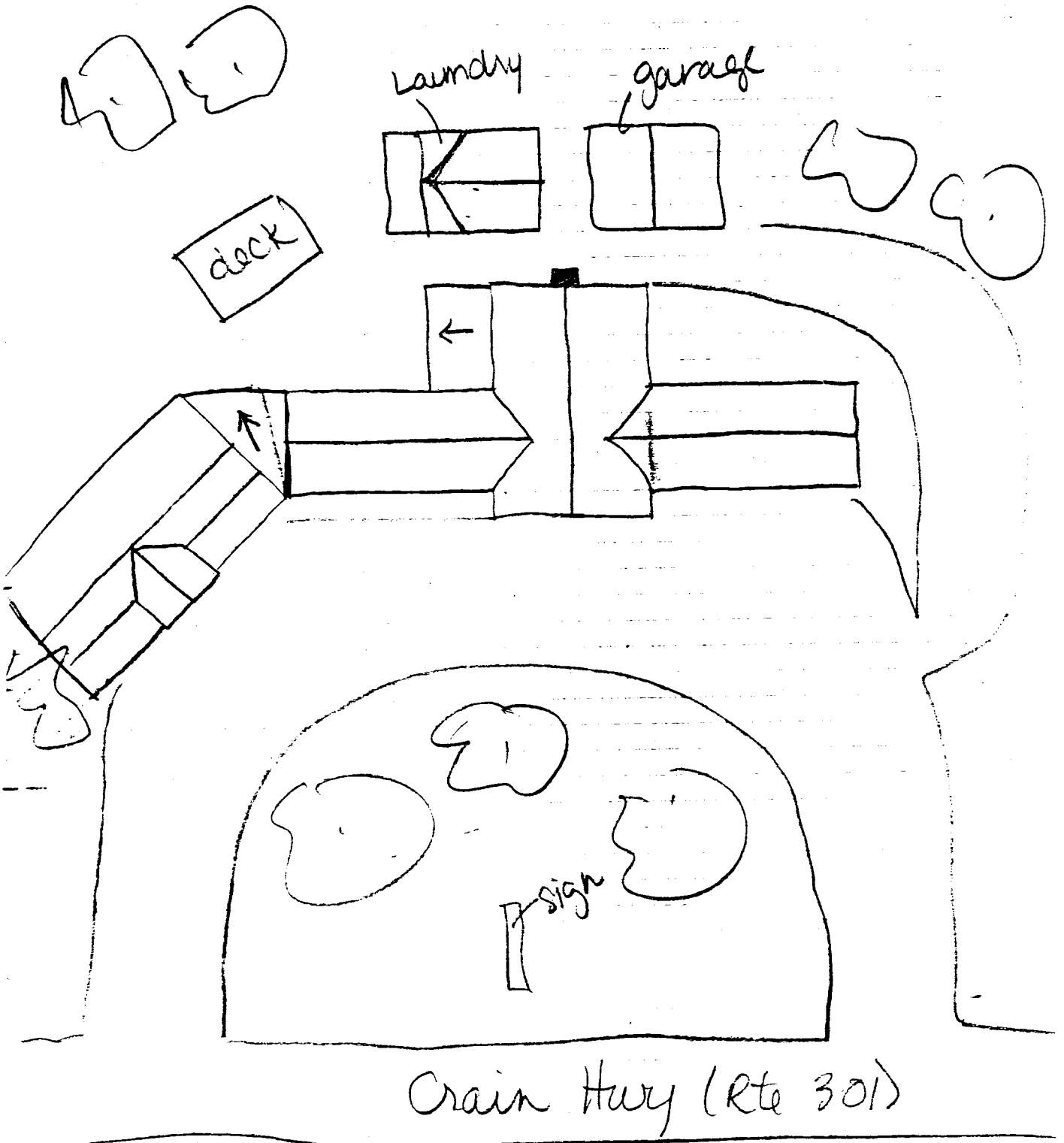
February 28, 1963: M. Leo and Hannah Storch to Diedrich and Anne Rust
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 2799 Folio 147

Parcels 1 and 2

April 22, 1963: Diedrich and Anne Rust to Reed C. and Alice M. Hoffman
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 2809 Folio 19

April 29, 1977: Reed C. and Alice M. Hoffman to Fred and Miriam K. Waters, Jr.
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 4755 Folio 333

December 23, 1996: Fred and Miriam K. Waters, Jr. to Amish, Inc.
Land Records of Prince George's County
Liber 11321 Folio 684



Forest Hills Motel
2901 Crain Highway, SW PG:79-76

Prince George's County
Maryland

N→

Resource Sketch Map
Not Drawn to Scale

PG:79-76

1394 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SW
PG: 79-75

2901 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SW
PG: 79-76

3807 OLD CRAIN HIGHWAY
PG: 79-77

4000 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SE
PG: 79-78

4109 CRAIN HIGHWAY, SW
PG: 79-79

15008 MARLBORO PIKE
PG: 79-80

Bristol USGS Quad

PG: 79-76

Forest Hills
MOTEL
VACANCY
TV
AAA

Forest Hills Motel
2901 Crain Highway, SW
Prince George's County, MD
Tracceries
June 1999
MD SHPO

96 17-76

Forest Hills Motel
2901 Crain Highway, SW
Prince George's County, MD
Tracceries
June 1999
MD SHPO
northeast elevation
2 of 6

PG:79-76

Forest Hills Motel
2901 Crain Highway, SW
Prince George's County, MD
Tracceries
June 1999
MD SHPO

east elevation
3 of 6

PG:79-76

Forest Hills Motel
2901 Crain Highway, SW
Prince George's County, MD
Traceries
June 1999
MD SHPO

northeast corner
7 of 16

PG:79-76

Forest Hills Motel
2901 Crain Highway, SW
Prince Georges County, MD
Traceries
June 1999
MD SHPO

west elevation
5 of 6

PG:79-76

Forest Hills Motel
2901 Crain Highway, SW
Prince George's County, MD
Traceries
June 1999
MD SHPO

southwest corner

6 of 6