S-503
Byrd's Seafood
Crisfield
Private

c. 1910

Known for the past fifty years as Byrd's Seafood company, this long brick warehouse type structure stands at the west end of 7th Street next to the complex of the John T. Handy Company. The long rectangular brick and concrete block structure, now covered with a coat of stucco, was assembled around 1910. In its early history it was the site of the C. A. Lockerman Seafood Company in the part of Crisfield known as "Hoptown." The structure is designated on the oldest Sanborn Insurance map for this part of the city, printed in 1917.

The packinghouse, consisting of a two-story, gable-roofed front section housing the company office, cooler and canning room, fronts a long gable roofed structure that houses the picking room as well as additional refrigeration rooms at its northwest end. The brick packinghouse, located on the Annemessex River, is flanked by a boat slip on its northeast side.

Byrd's Seafood Company packinghouse stands out in Crisfield as one of the oldest and best preserved structures related to the commercial seafood industry in Somerset County. Exposed within the main picking room is an intact early twentieth-century principal truss roof system as well as the furniture and equipment related to the seafood business. Early twentieth-century Continental Canning Company canning machines remain in use.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. S-503

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic: Byrd's Seafood

other: C. A. Lockerman Seafood Company

2. Location

street and number: 105 North 7th Street — __ not for publication

city, town: Crisfield — vicinity

county: Somerset

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

name: Byrd's Seafood c/o Mr. Jim Dodson

street and number: 105 North 7th Street — telephone 410-968-2977

city, town: Crisfield — state Maryland — zip code 21817

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Clerk of Court — liber ITP 421 — folio 300

city, town: Princess Anne — tax map 102 — tax parcel 126 — tax ID number 7-112025

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 at MHT
_____ Other:_____

6. Classification

Category
__ district
x building(s)
__ structure
__ site
__ object

Ownership
__ public
x private
__ both

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

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	____	buildings
____	____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	____	Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

_____

7. Description

Inventory No. S-503

Condition

___ excellent ___ deteriorated
x__ good ___ ruins
___ fair ___ altered

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

Byrd's Seafood is located at 105 North 7th Street in the "Hoptown" section of Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The brick packinghouse stands at the northwest end of the street with a boat slip bordering the property on its northeast side. The one- and two-story rectangular brick structure faces southeast, and the main roof is oriented on a northwest/southeast axis.

Built around 1910, the seafood packinghouse house has a two-story, three-bay, gable-roofed front section that stands forward of a long single-story gable roofed warehouse type structure. The brick packinghouse has an exterior coat of stucco, and the medium pitched roofs are covered with corrugated tin.

The southeast (main) elevation is a three-bay façade divided vertically by four projecting, plainly finished pilasters that rise to the edge of the gable roof. The southern of the three bays is pierced by the principal entrance, and the center bay is pierced by a secondary door opening. The second story is lighted by single-pane or two-over-one sash windows featuring segmental arched openings. Between the two center pilasters is the company name in large red colored block letters. The edge of the roof is finished flush with a plain bargeboard. Impressed in the concrete paving in front of the building is the name "Eastern Shore Seafood."

The northeast and southwest side elevations are defined by three projecting pilasters that divide the wall space into two bays with a variety of single-pane or smaller window openings piercing the wall surfaces. The south side has a boarded over door opening. Under each eave is corbelled brickwork that decorates the top of the wall surface within each inset panel. The edge of the roof has a slightly extended eave with open soffits.

The side elevations of the single-story section are ten bays across and are marked as well by plain pilasters with groups of six-pane windows hinged at top between each pair of pilasters. Attached to the north side is a small concrete block addition covered by a shed roof. Attached to the northwest corner of the packinghouse is a shed roofed frame shelter that covers an area between the boat slip and the packinghouse. Piercing the roof of the packinghouse are several metal stacks and vents. Located to the north of the packinghouse is a pivoted metal hoist. At the northwest gable end of the packinghouse is another open shelter supported by posts.

The interior is divided into three principal rooms. The southernmost room is entered through the main entrance, and a rudimentary staircase on the south wall provides access to a second floor storage room and office. Located on the first floor are three Continental Canning machines along with a cooler on the north wall that is entered through a diagonal board door hung on strap hinges. The floor is poured concrete, and the ceiling is sheathed a combination of tongue-and-groove boards or plywood sheets. The center of the packinghouse is devoted to a large picking room dominated by a series of trusses with paired tie beams and principal rafters bolted together and strengthened by diagonal braces. The principal rafter roof trusses allow for a clear, unobstructed space where two rows of tables are set on a slightly sloped poured concrete floor. The floor is sloped in two directions to a low point in the center of the room. The third space in the packinghouse is at the north end where the main cold storage rooms are located.

8. Significance

Inventory No. S-503

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

Specific dates **Architect/Builder**

Construction dates

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 projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Largely dating to the early twentieth century, the packinghouse of Byrd's Seafood is a combination brick and concrete block structure that survives as one of the oldest and best preserved structures related to the commercial seafood industry in Somerset County. Fronting the long single-story brick structure is a two-story section that houses the canning room and a company office. Exposed within the main picking and storage rooms is an intact, early twentieth-century principal truss roof system. The building retains as well its historical relationship with the water. A boat slip is located on the northeast side of the packinghouse and the Annemessex is located to the northwest.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Byrd's Seafood, Inc. was established by G. Clifford Byrd (1907-1964) in 1950.[1] The company was originally located in the Brooklyn section of Crisfield, but moved to the Hoptown section after a few years. The Hoptown building was originally an oyster house—the C. A. Lockerman Seafood Company, established in 1916. Part of the current structure may have been Eastern Shore Seafood as that name can be found in a piece of concrete on the site. All of the old brick buildings were used to pack oysters and tomatoes.[2] A fire in the 1930s started in a heating stove, burning off the front part of the building.[3] Byrd's Seafood packed crabmeat under the brand names 'Best Buy Byrd's,' or 'Byrd's Brand.'[4]

In the early 1950s G. Clifford Byrd moved to Washington, D. C. to accept a government position as a field representative of the National Fisheries Institute, and John S. Catlin, who had been with the company since 1950, took over the management of the company as executive vice-president.[5] Catlin was elected mayor of Crisfield in 1962 and held that position for the next sixteen years.[6] In 1977 the company employed 46 people (41 women) to process crabmeat. Byrd later became the head of the food technology division of the

[1] Woodrow T. Wilson, *Crisfield, Maryland 1676-1976*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1977, p. 441.
[2] Interview with Jim Dodson by Kelly Feltault, Oral History 139.
[3] Conversation with Jim Dodson, Crisfield, Maryland, January 23, 2002.
[4] Letterhead in CBMM Collection dated May 9, 1964; "Maryland Brands," *Fishing Gazette*, October 1964, p. 18.
[5] :Cradle of Pasteurized Crab Meat," *Fishing Gazette*, October 1964, p. 68.
[6] Crisfield Mayor Aware of City's Priorities," Salisbury *Daily Times*, 1977.

National Fisheries Institute until his death in 1964. Mrs. Byrd headed the company after his death with a workforce of 40.[7]

Byrd, a bacteriologist, developed a pasteurization process for crabmeat in the 1940s with the support of several Crisfield seafood packing companies. In 1951, Mr. Byrd secured a patent for a "Method of Keeping the Meat of Shellfish in a Fresh Condition." The pasteurizing process allowed the canned meat to keep at least two years at a temperature of about 40 degrees. Following studies by the University of Maryland Seafood Processing laboratory, pasteurization of crabmeat was allowed on a wide scale beginning in 1958. Byrd's provided a crabmeat pasteurization service for other local firms under his patent for several years until a court found the process unpatentable and other firms were able to use the process themselves.

Henry D. "Hank" Pezzetti, Byrd's son-in-law, joined the company, becoming the firm's president.[8] In 1977, the company employed 46 people.[9] The workforce expanded to almost 100 people by 1987. Two of Byrd's workers, Joyce Fitchett and Francis Sterling, were world-class crab picking champions, winning first and second place in the 1986 National Hard Crab Derby crab picking contest. Pezzetti became president of the Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association and was a member of the State's ad hoc seafood industry revitalization committee.[10] In 1987, most of Byrd's crabmeat was sent to the Pennsylvania and New York markets. They shipped UPS and Federal Express orders all over the nation. Byrd's was selected as one of the six businesses in Maryland to debut the "Maryland with Pride" product logo in the 1980s.

In 1991, competition from imported crabmeat, and a mild winter which allowed crab-dredging operations in the Virginia waters of the Chesapeake Bay to build up a large inventory of crabmeat, and a slumping national economy hurt the Crisfield seafood industry. Byrd's, which usually employed 35 to 40 people, postponed the start of crabpicking operations until June.[11] The company was sold to Jim Dodson and Waldo Hanson and continues to trade as Byrd's Seafood. They employed as many as 42 pickers in 1998.[12] The company was the first in Crisfield to hire Mexican migrant workers under the Federal H2-B non-agricultural guest worker program in 1999.[13] However, there was not enough work to keep them busy. In 2001, they only employed a maximum of twenty local pickers, five of whom also worked other jobs.

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[7] Advertisement in the *Fishing Gazette*, October 1964, p. 68; *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1965-66*, Maryland Department of Economic Development, p. 233.
[8] "Old Crab," *Vested Interest*, May 1988, p. 2; published for Retirees and Employees of Continental Can Company.
[9] *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1977-1978*, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development.
[10] Brice Stump, "Crisfield Seafood Company First To Use New Logo," c. 1987-88, unattributed newspaper clipping found in the Seafood Industry vertical file, Wicomico Free Library, Salisbury, Maryland.
[11] Eddie Curlett, "Crisfield Crab Industry Troubled," *The Daily Times*, Salisbury, June 11, 1991.
[12] Conversation with Jim Dodson, Crisfield, Maryland, January 23, 2002.
[13] Personal interview with Jim Dodson, December 18, 2001.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. S-503

Name Byrd's Seafood
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 3

Byrd's Seafood, Inc.
105 7th Street
Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland

Map 102, Parcel 126

421/300 John B. Robins IV, Substitute Trustee

to

5/20/1994 Waldo L. Hansen, Jr.

Item Three: Situate at the end of Seventh Street and beginning at a point at the northernmost corner of Parcel 3 on a plat of Hoptown prepared by W. Ballard Miles, 5/31/1948 (File D-319) BLB 2/8, as established in a plat HFL 1/130

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. S-503

Somerset County Land Records, various volumes, Somerset County Courthouse.
(See footnotes for a full listing of resources consulted)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property .8066 acre
Acreage of historical setting ¼ acre
Quadrangle name Crisfield, Maryland Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

11. Form Prepared by

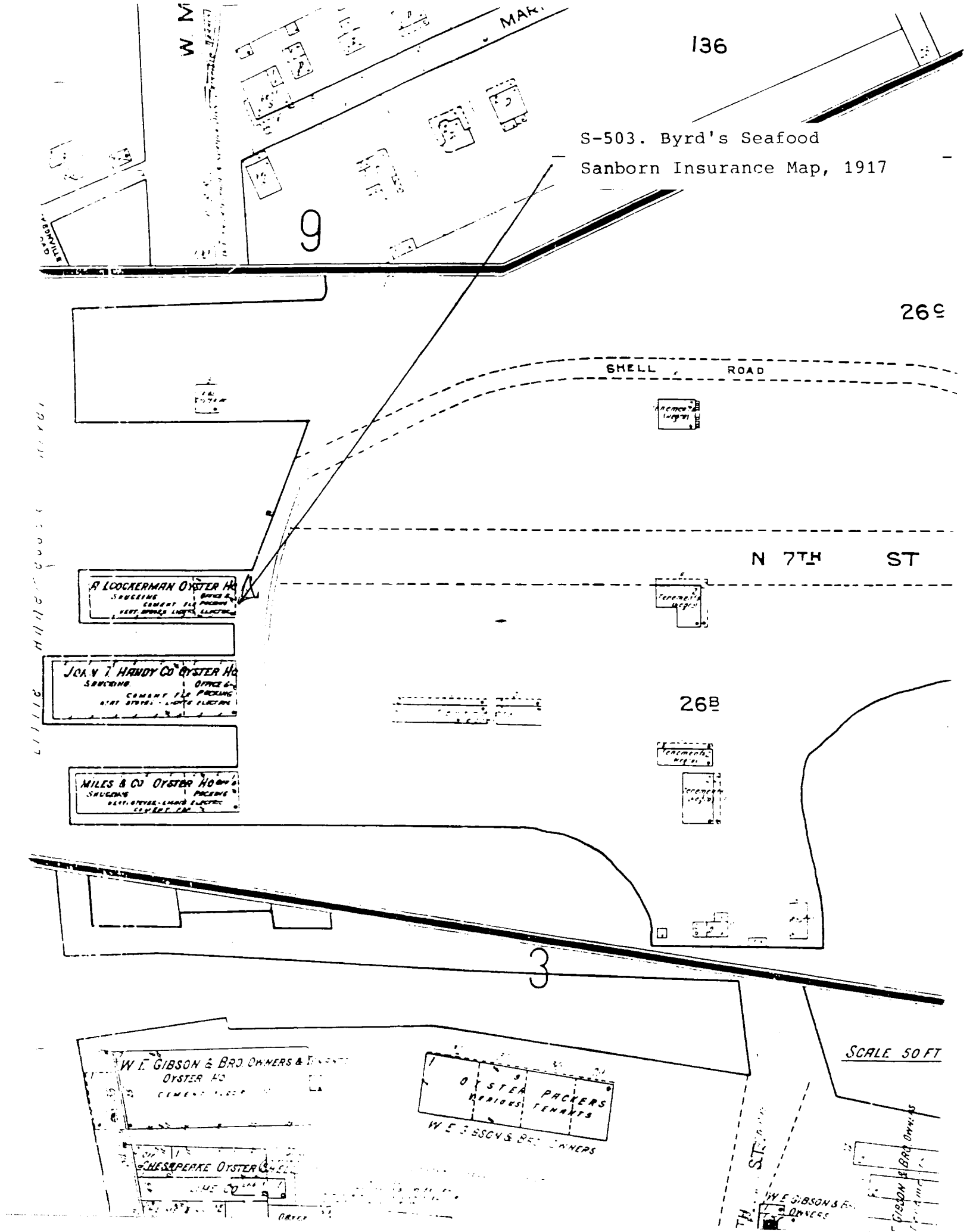
name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian; Virginia Jenkins, Business Historian, CBMM		
organization	Private Consultants	date	1/23/2002
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

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 21032-2023
410-514-7600

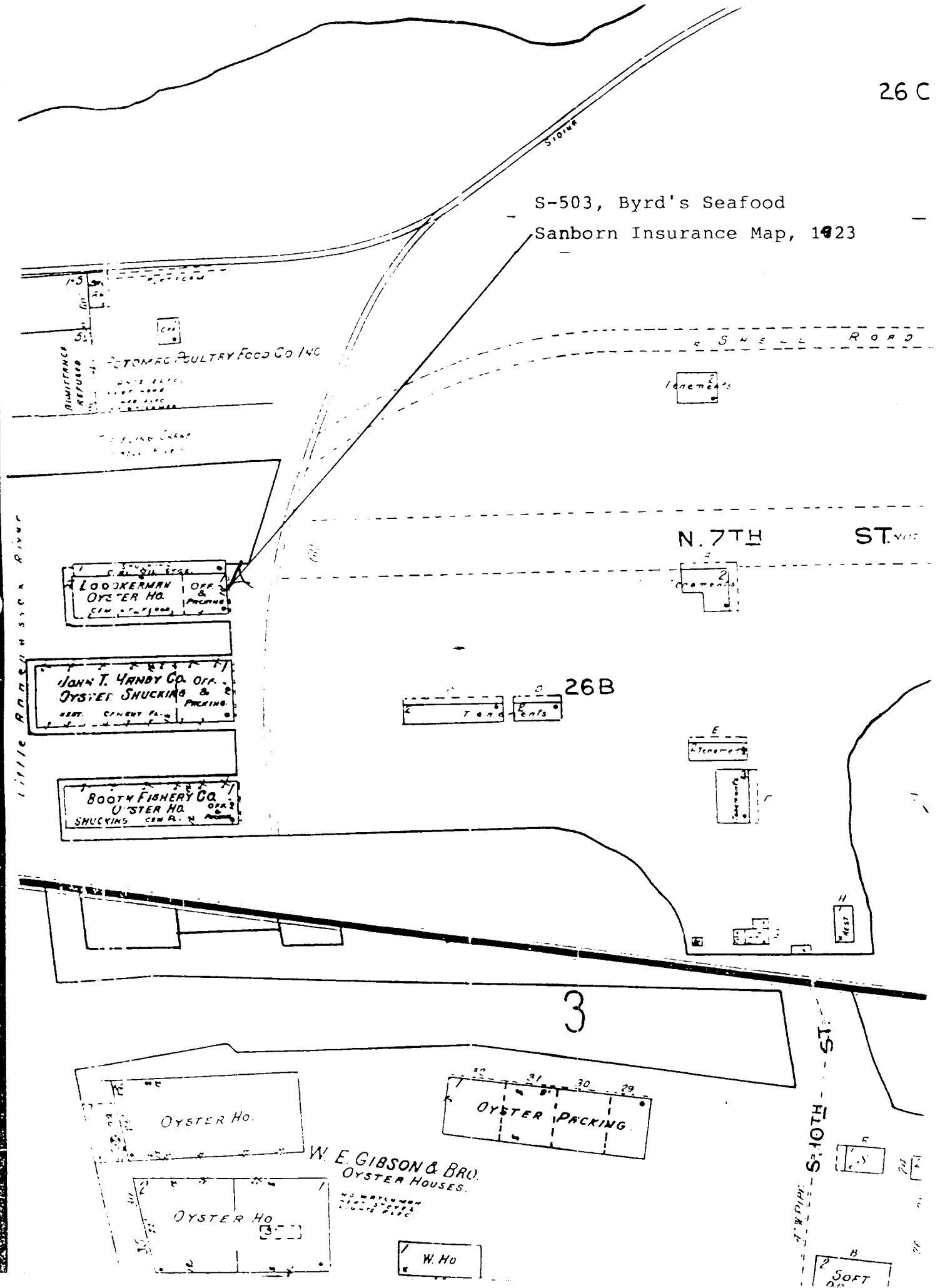
S-503. Byrd's Seafood
Sanborn Insurance Map, 1917

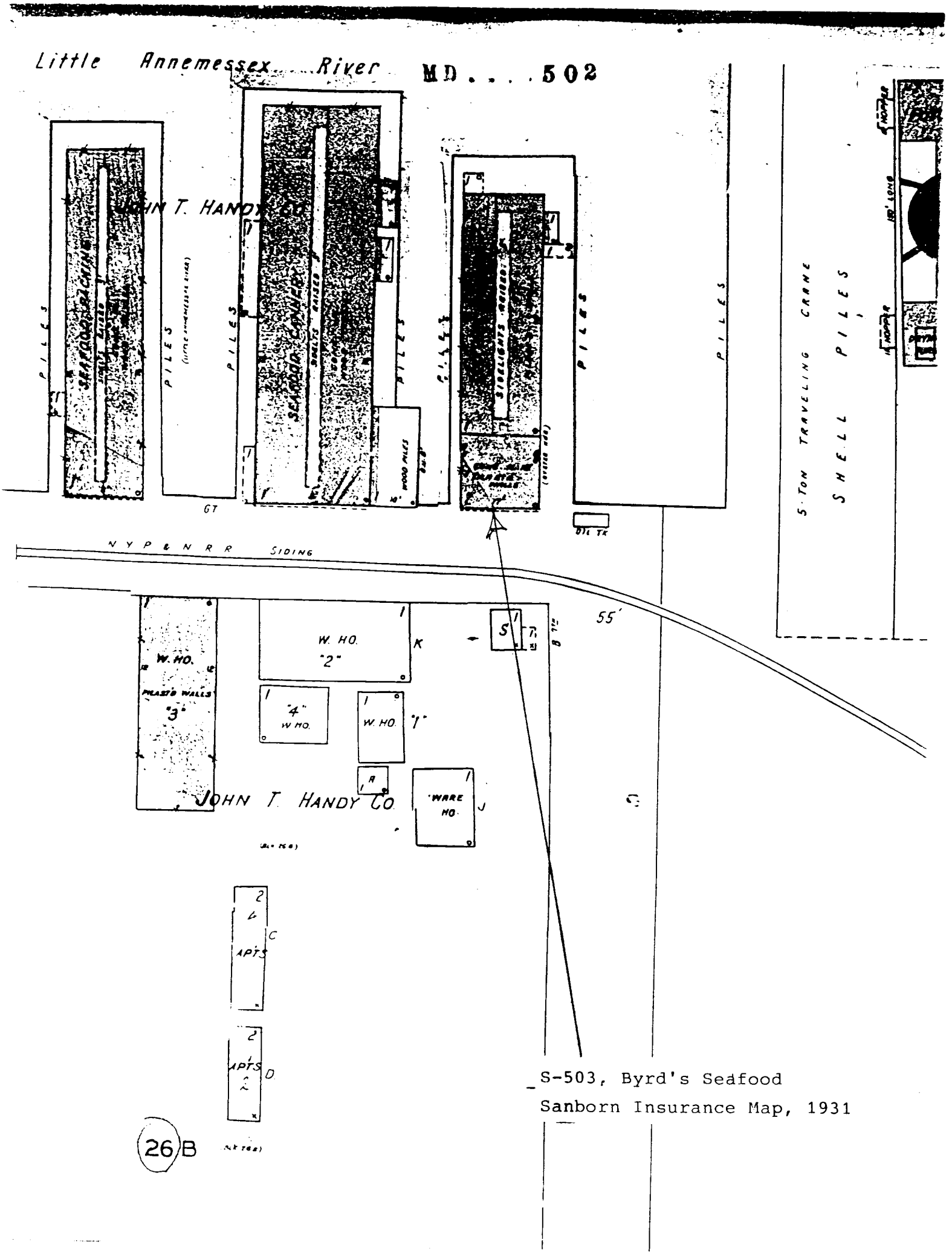


26 C

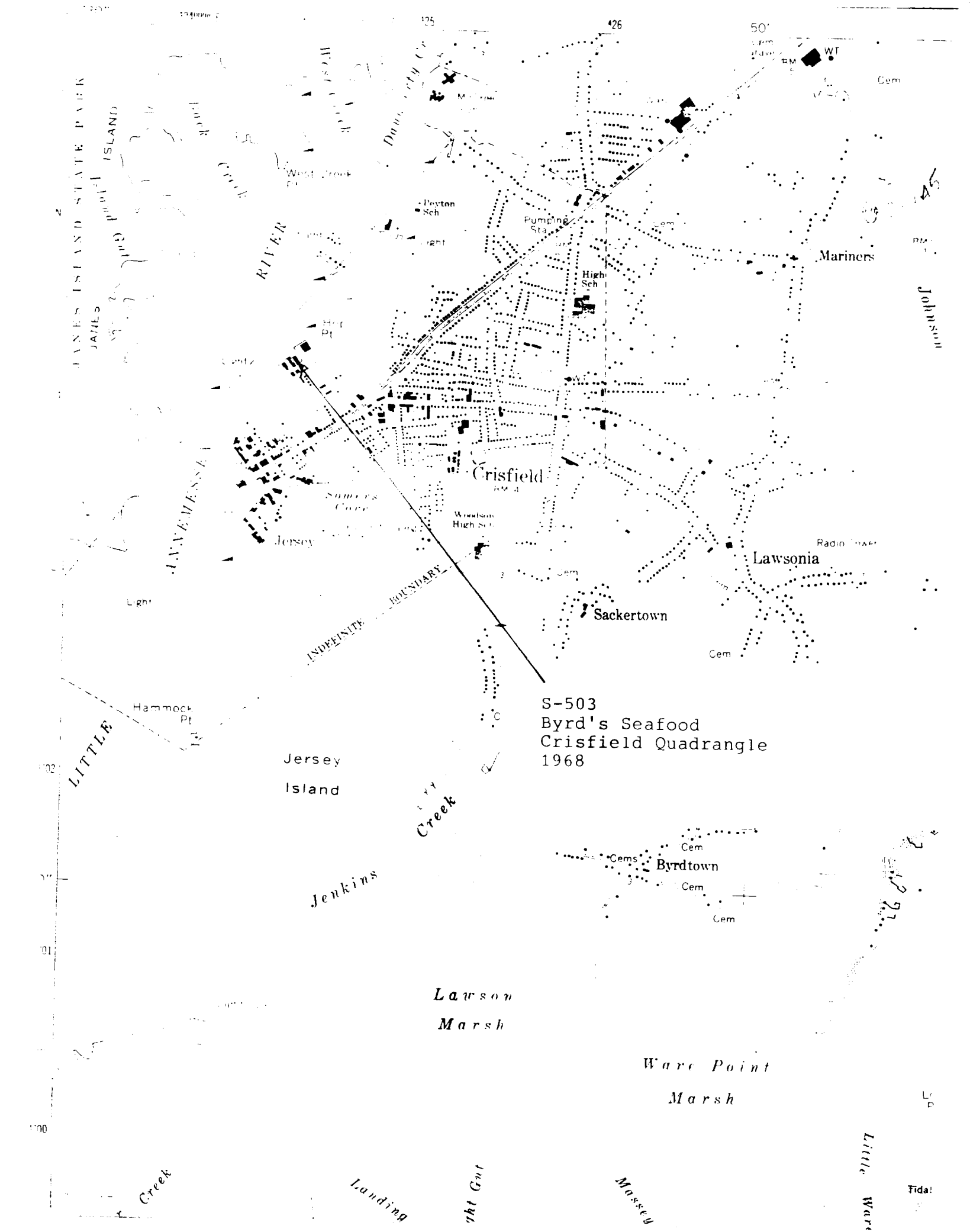
S-503, Byrd's Seafood

Sanborn Insurance Map, 1923





S-503, Byrd's Seafood
Sanborn Insurance Map, 1931


S-503
Byrd's Seafood
Crisfield Quadrangle
1968
Crisfield
Jersey
Sackertown
Lawsonia
Mariners
Byrdtown
Jersey
Island
Jenkins
Creek
Lawson
Marsh
Ware Point
Marsh
Hammock
Pt
Peyton
Sch
Pumping
Sta
High
Sch
Woodson
High Sch
Somers
Cove
Johnson
Radio Tower
Cem
Cems
Light
INDEFINITE BOUNDARY
LITTLE
ANNEMESSE
RIVER
JANES ISLAND STATE PARK
JANES
ISLAND
Creek
Landing
Massey
Little Ware
Tidal

BYRD'S

S-503
BYRN'S SEAFOOD
CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO., MD.
SOUTHEAST ELEVATION
1/2002, PAUL TOUART, PHOTOGRAPHER
NEG./MD HISTORICAL TRUST

1 OF 6

BYRD'S

S-503

BYRD'S SEAFOOD

CRISFIELD, SOMERSET COUNTY, MD.

SOUTHEAST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOMKINS, PHOTOGRAPHER

NPS / MD HISTORICAL TRUST

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S-503

BYRD'S STATION

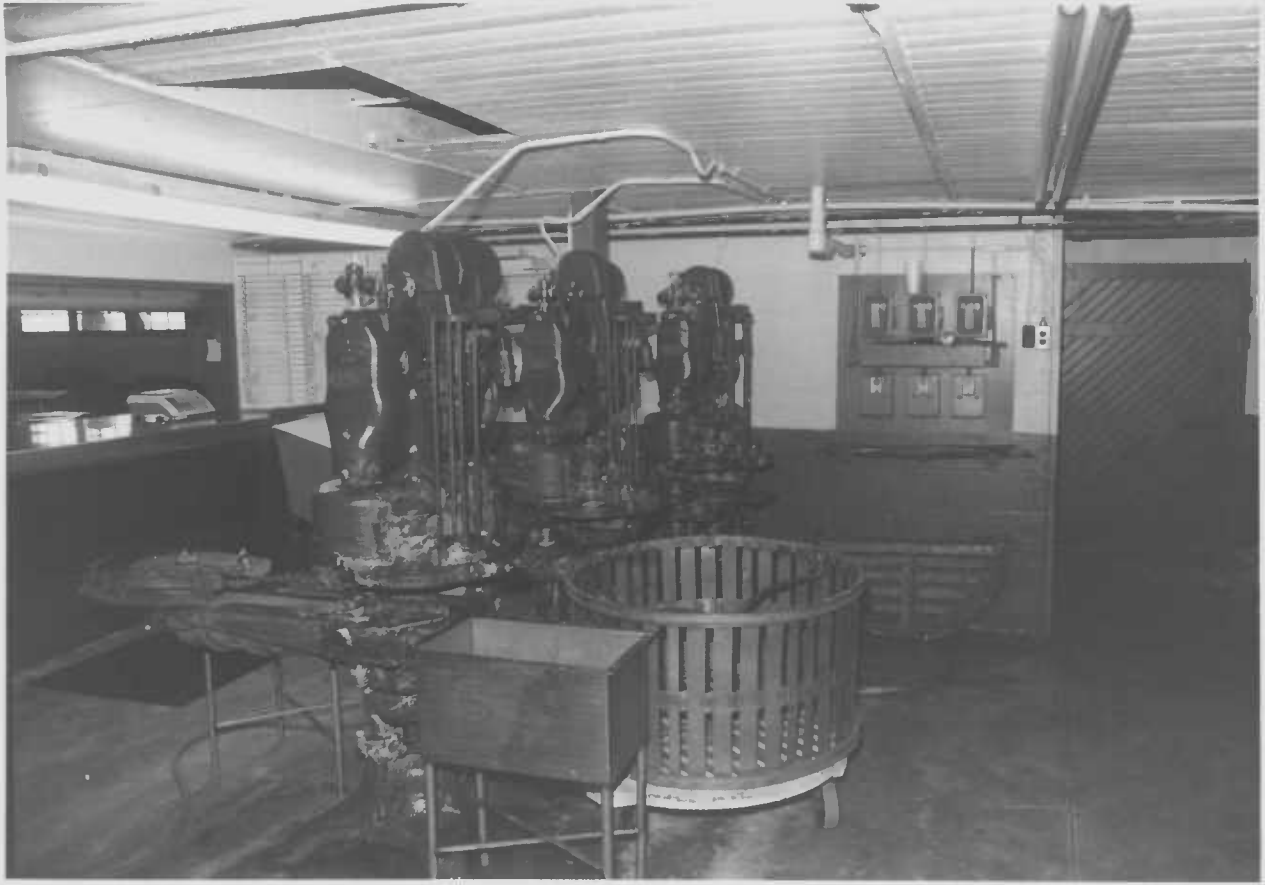
CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO. MD.

CANNING EQUIPMENT

1/2002, PAUL TOWART, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEC, MD HISTORICAL TRUST

3 OF 6



8-503

MYRA'S SEAFOOD

CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO, MD.

CANNING EQUIPMENT

1/2002, PAUL TOUART, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEG. / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

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S-503

Byrd's Sawmill

Crisfield, Somerset Co., Md.

Picking Room

1/2002, Paul Tomart, photographer

NEA/Md. Historical Trust

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S-503
BYRD'S SEAFOOD
CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO. MD.
PRINCIPAL TRUSSES
1/2002, PAUL TOWNSEND, PHOTO
NEG. / MD. HIST. TRUST

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S-503

Byrd's Seaford

Crisfield, Somerset Co., MD.

Northeast elevation

2/2002, Paul Touart, photographer

Nez./MD. Historical Trust

S-503
Byrd's Seafood
Crisfield, Somerset Co., MD
Northwest elevation
2/2002, Paul Touart, Photographer
MEC/MD Historical Trust