MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

NR Eligible: yes X
no ___

Property Name: Easton Gas Plant Inventory Number: T-1156

Address: 1 South West Street City: Easton Zip Code: 21601

County: Talbot USGS Topographic Map: Easton

Owner: Town of Easton; Easton Utilities Is the property being evaluated a district? No yes

Tax Parcel Number: 1311 Tax Map Number: 104 Tax Account ID Number: 027174

Project: Property Remediation and Building Removal Agency: MD Department of the Environment

Site visit by MHT Staff: ____no ___yes Name: _____ Date: _____

Is the property located within a historic district? ____yes X no Property is being evaluated as part of one

If the property is within a district District Inventory Number: _____

NR-listed district X yes Eligible district ____yes District Name: Easton Historic District

Preparer's Recommendation: Contributing resource X yes ___no Non-contributing but eligible in another context ____

If the property is not within a district (or the property is a district)

Preparer's Recommendation: Eligible X yes ____no As part of an expanded Easton Historic District

Criteria: X A ___B ___C ___D Considerations: ____A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G X None

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: MIHP Form and Compliance Report

Description of Property and Eligibility Determination: *(Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map and photo)*

The former Easton Gas Plant was constructed in 1934 to replace an older complex. The current building was designed by the Town of Easton to manufacture gas for municipal lighting and for domestic and commercial heating and lighting. The Gas Plant continued to manufacture gas until 1955 when the local production was halted and the Town's system was converted to natural gas. The building was intended to house all of the operations of the municipal gas utility with space for administration and billing, meter and equipment repair, and gas production.

The building that was constructed in 1934 is a two-level, brick building on a poured, reinforced concrete slab and foundation. The building shows evidence of the influence of Colonial-Revival design on the east of West Street façade and entrance with a castellated and corbelled cornice with a projecting central bay and Palladian influenced entrance. The windows are multi-light metal, industrial frames with clear glass. The roof on the administrative section is a flat roof laid behind a parapet wall. The roof over the process area is a pitched gable roof with a lower flat roof over the workshop and meter area that fronts onto Dover or Court Street.

It is recommended that the property be considered eligible for listing on the National Register as part of an expanded Easton Historic District. The current district includes the property directly across West Street.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended X **Eligibility not recommended** _____

Criteria: X **A** ___**B** ___**C** ___**D** **Considerations:** ___**A** ___**B** ___**C** ___**D** ___**E** ___**F** ___**G** ___**None**

Comments: This bldg is located in the Easton HD, but ~~xxxx~~ documentation suggests POS of significance ends 1930 - if POS were expanded, this bldg would contribute to HD.

Patricia M Buck 2/6/03

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

[signature] 2/27/03

Reviewer, NR Program **Date**

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. T-1156

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	Easton Gas Plant
other	Easton Gas Manufacturing Plant

2. Location

street and number	1 South West Street	__ not for publication
city, town	Easton	__ vicinity
county	Talbot	

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

name	Town of Easton/Easton Utilities				
street and number	P.O. Box 520			telephone	
city, town	Easton	state	MD	zip code	21601

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Talbot County Courthouse			liber 258		folio 318	
city, town	Easton	tax map 104	tax parcel	1131	tax ID number	027174	

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
__X__ Other: MD Department of the Environment

6. Classification

Category
_____district
__X__building(s)
_____structure
_____site
_____object

Ownership
__X__public
_____private
_____both

Current Function

_____agriculture	_____landscape
_____commerce/trade	_____recreation/culture
_____defense	_____religion
_____domestic	_____social
_____education	_____transportation
_____funerary	_____work in progress
_____government	_____unknown
_____health care	__X__vacant/not in use
_____industry	_____other:

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
n/a

7. Description

Inventory No. T-1156

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.

The Easton Gas Plant was constructed in 1934 to replace an older building which was used to manufacture gas for use within the Town of Easton. The existing building is a two-story, brick building on a poured, reinforced concrete floor. The office area is at a higher level than the side work areas along Dover Street. The gas production areas on the south side of the building are a single level but were built to appear as a two-story building to accommodate the gas manufacturing equipment. The building was erected to process gas for heating and for lighting and to provide workshops and office space for Easton Utilities. The building has a flat roof with parapet walls. The front façade faces South West Street and it is marked by a variety of Colonial Revival features. Among them are a castellated front with a corbelled cornice. The entrance door is set in a faux Palladian opening with a central arch and side windows rather than side lights. There is a cast stone marquee across the front which is inscribed "Easton Gas Plant" and to which are added the dates 1860 and 1934. The former marks the date that the gas plant went into operation and the later indicates the date of construction of the existing building. There are no remains of the gas process within the building except for a large vertical tank which may have been a reheater and some evidence of piping. The meters in the meter room date to after 1955 when gas production was halted at this facility and the town shifted to other sources for gas. The building has a landscaped lawn on the front or West Street side and on the Dover Street side. The rear and south side open onto an asphalt-paved parking area. The entire complex is contaminated with residue from the gas manufacturing operations.

The Easton Gas Plant was constructed in 1934 to replace an older gas manufacturing plant. This building is constructed of four-course common bond, red brick with a poured, concrete-slab foundation. The building appears as to have three distinct sections but it is a single unit. The offices and a workroom are located on the east section which faces South West Street. This section has a flat roof with a parapet wall marked by a corbelled cornice and a slightly projecting front area. The single-leaf entrance is located within a faux Palladian design element with a central arch and two side windows serving as the outer element of the Palladian window. The gas production area is located on the southwest section of the building and is distinguished by a peak roof that rises above the office and workroom section. This tall unit was constructed to provide the necessary height for the gas processing equipment. The third section is a low, two-level unit on the north side or the Dover Street side. This area contained additional workrooms and a garage. Attached to the northwest side is a small, one-story meter house with a flat roof. This appears to have been part of the original building as the brickwork and the foundation show the same construction marks and there are no visible seems in the building.

The windows of the gas plant have metal industrial frames with clear glass. Each of the windows has a cast stone lintel and a flat arch above. Most of the windows appear to be either original to the construction of the building or to have been manufactured for this building. None of the window openings have been reduced in size or altered. The principal door on West Street is a single-leaf wood door set in a wood frame. There are several single-leaf, personnel doors which also appear to be original or consistent with the design of the building. However, there are a number of roll-up garage doors on the north and south sides which replace original doors or are set into openings that have been enlarged to accommodate this newer type of door. However, there are two large garage-type doors on the south and west side that do appear original to the building. In addition to the use of the wood doors, they are marked by the placement of a large multi-light transom above each.

The interior is plain and reflects the building's industrial character. The entrance hall is very small and leads to three rooms. To the north or left is an area that was used as an office by the gas company. This is a single, rectangular room with a door that leads to the interior of the building at the far northwest side. To the right is a small hall that leads to the side workyard and to which have been added a washroom for the workcrews. This area is partitioned by cement block and contains a small shower area and two lavatories. To the rear of the entrance hall, there is a door that leads to a stair to the upper level and a door that leads into the manufacturing or process area. The process areas are large open spaces which would have contained the heaters, piping, and purifiers needed to process manufactured gas. All of the equipment has been removed and there is very little evidence of attachment points in the floors or on the walls in the manufacturing area.

Beyond the building, there is the paved parking area to the south and the west. The area to the east and the north of the building has been landscaped with grass, trees, and other small plantings. There is no evidence, above ground, of the gas holders and the piping and distribution system for the gas plant. In addition, there is no above ground evidence of the tanks and other holders which are located on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for the 1885 to 1940 period. A 1961 drawing of the distribution system of the plant,

which was prepared by the Easton Utilities staff, shows an extensive amount of gas manufacturing equipment but that has all been removed.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. T-1156

Name Easton Gas Plant; Easton, Talbot County, Maryland
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

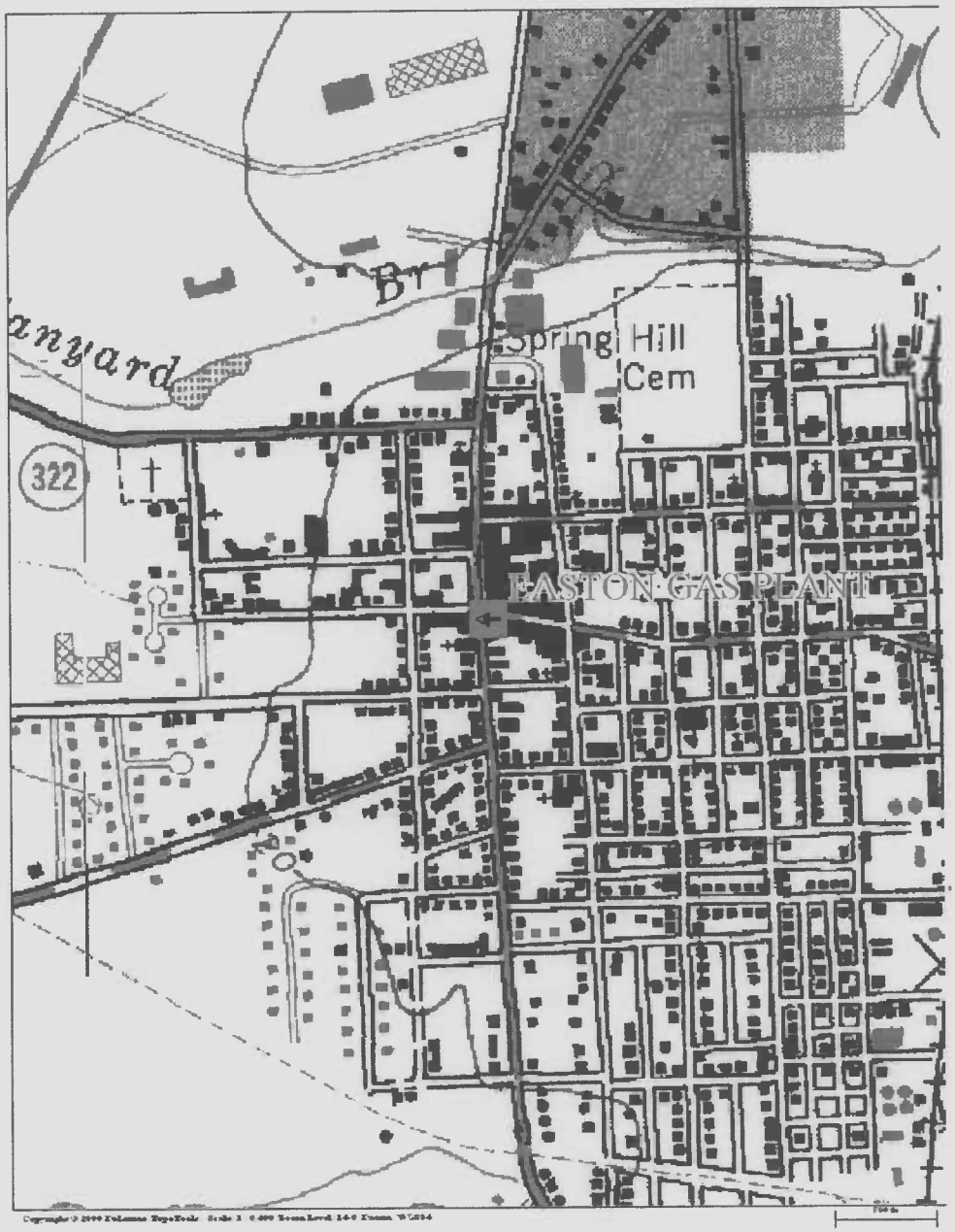

Figure 1 Easton Gas Plant Location

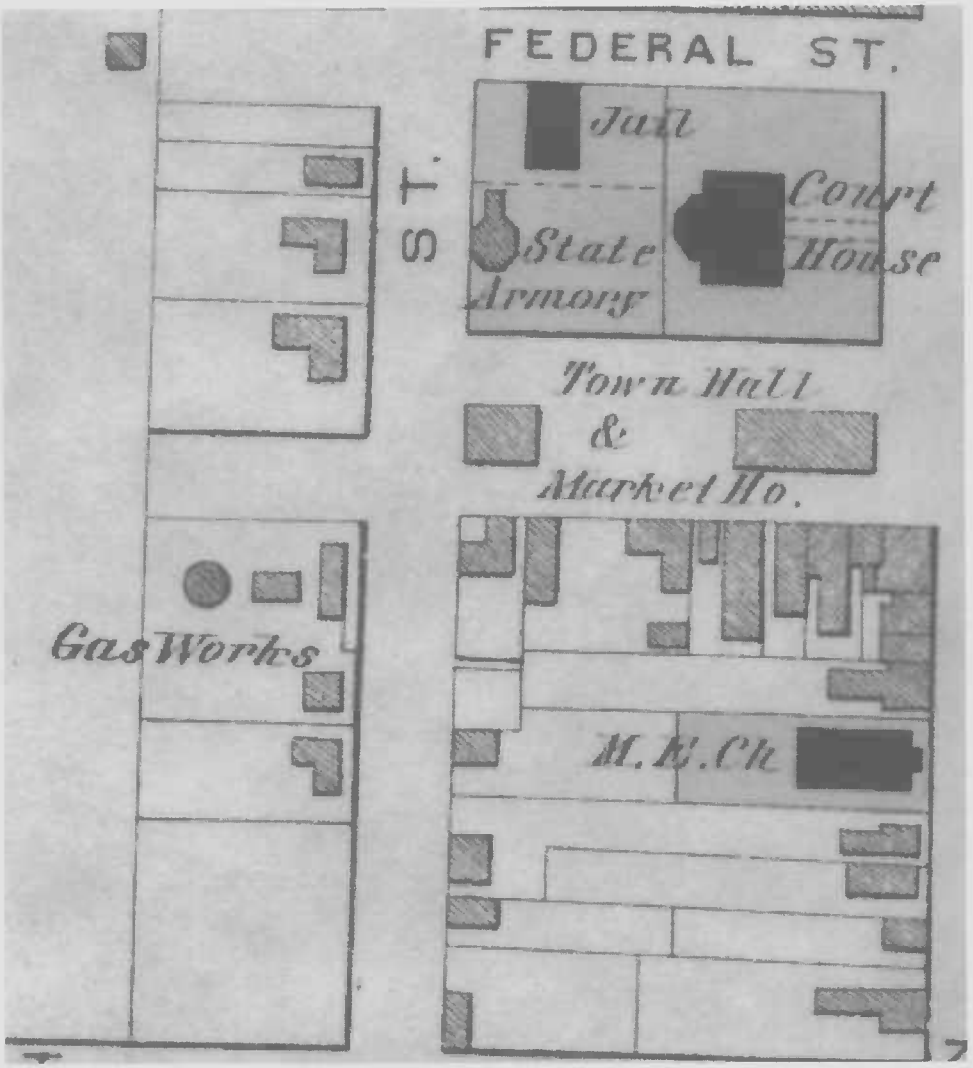

Figure 2 Town of Easton; 1877

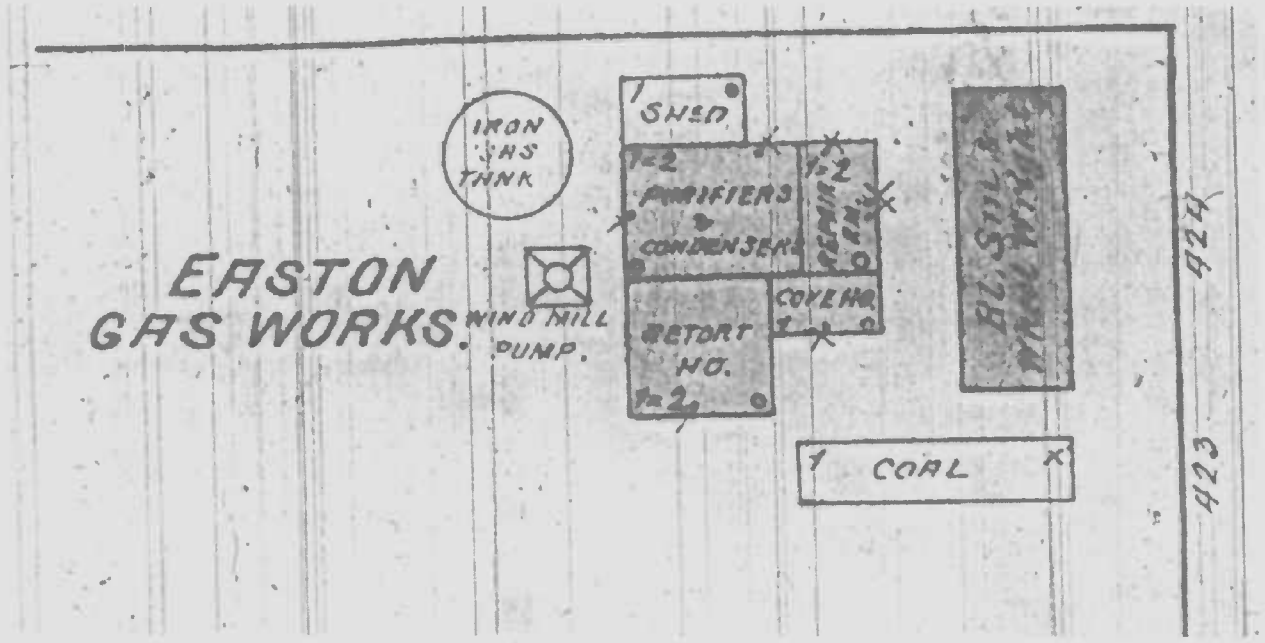

Figure 3 Sanborn Fire Insurance map; 1885 & 1891

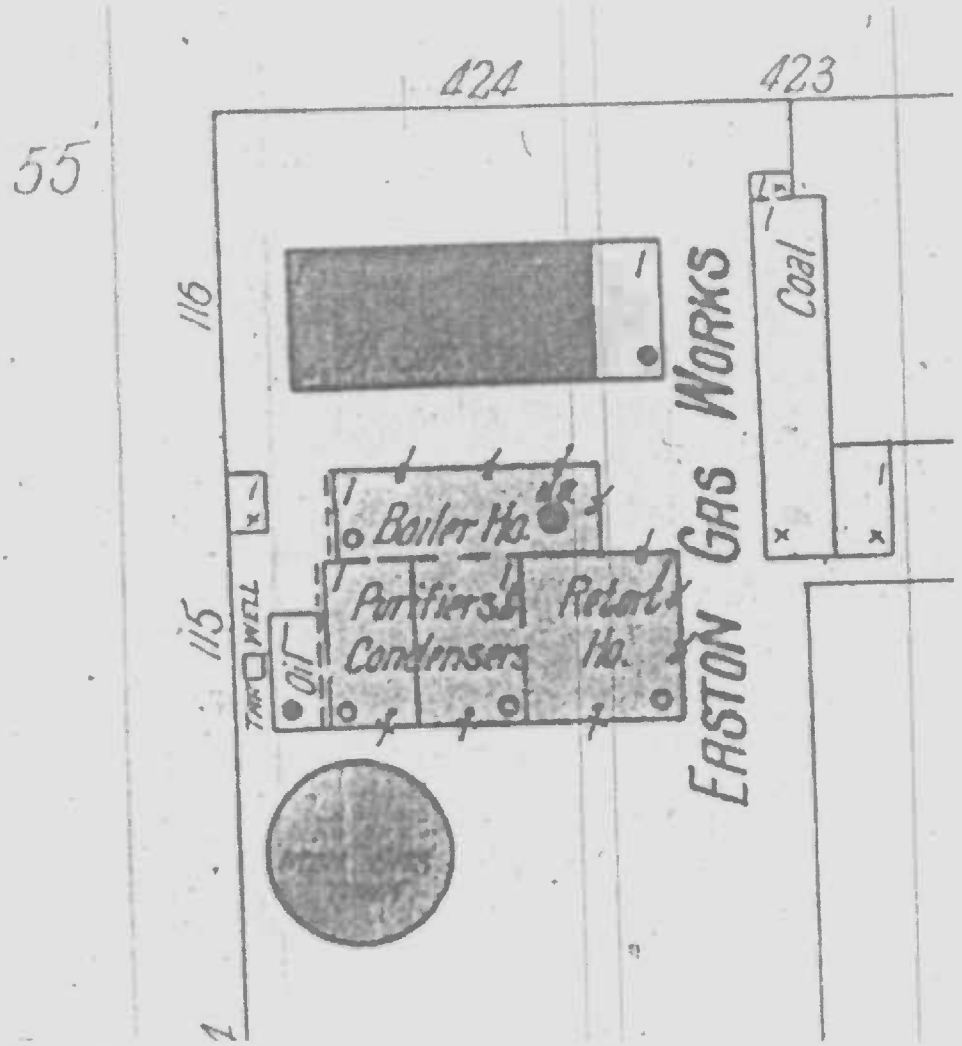

Figure 4 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map; 1901

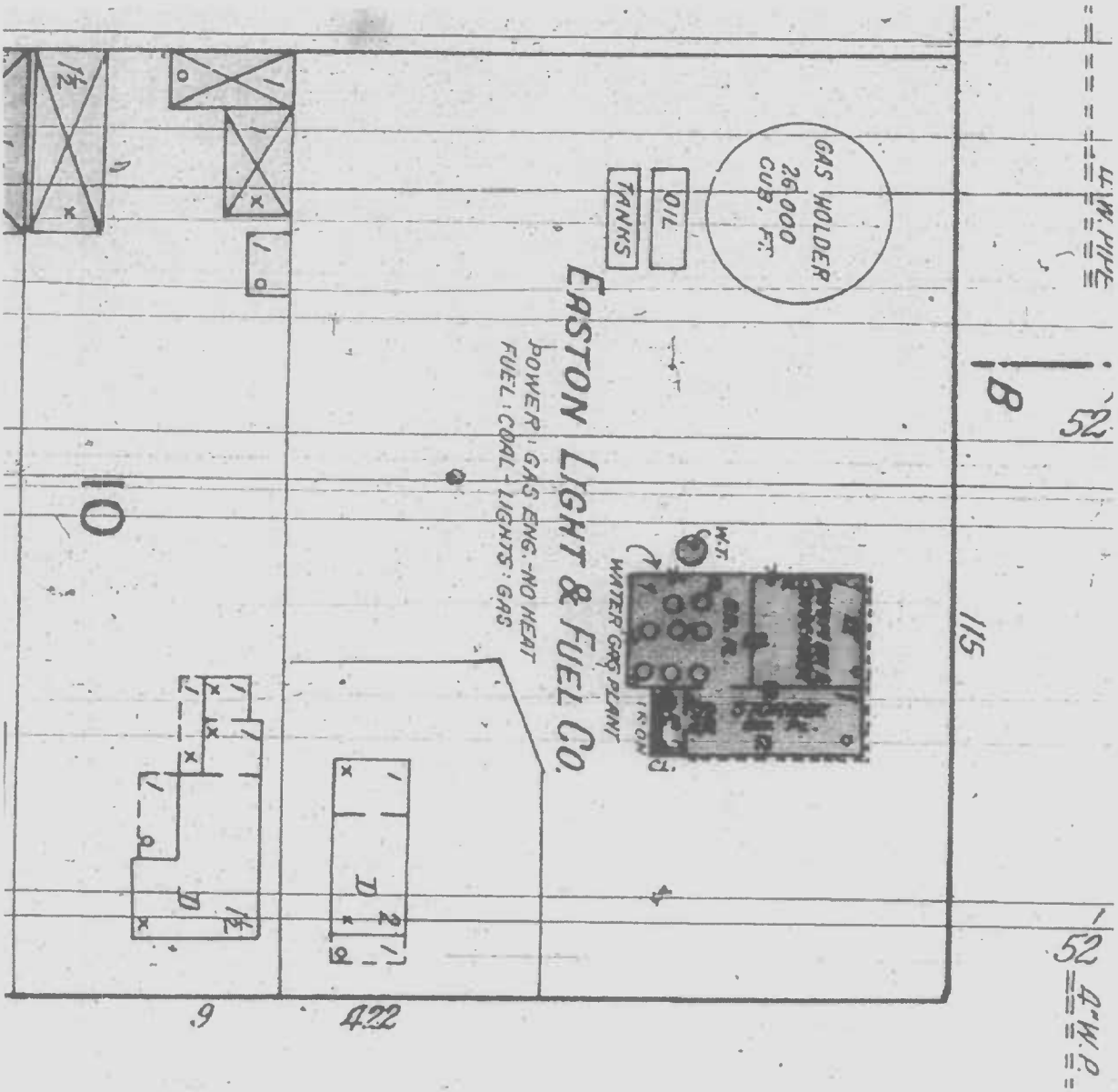

Figure 5 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map; 1919

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. T-1156

Name Easton Gas Plant, Easton, Talbot County, Maryland
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 6

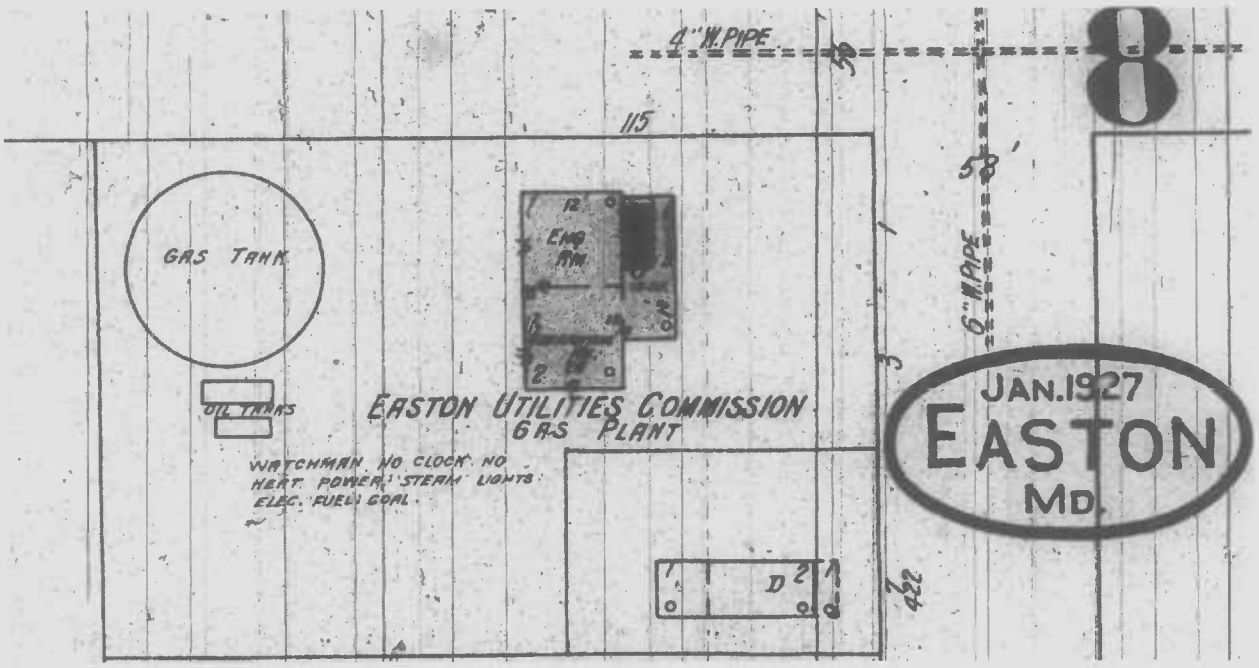

Figure 6 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map; 1927

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. T-1156

Name Easton Gas Plant, Easton, Talbot County, Maryland
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 7

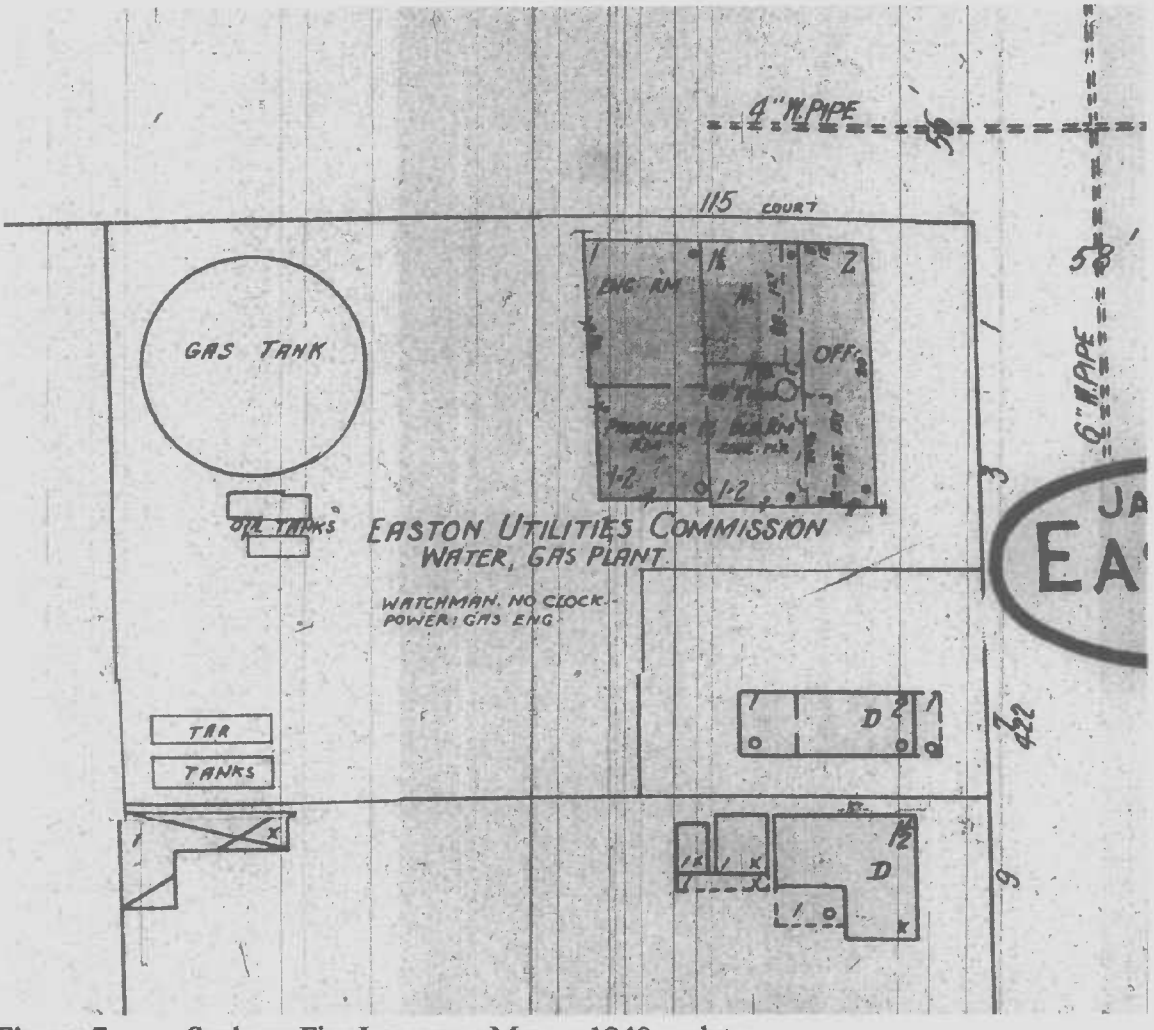

Figure 7 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map; c 1940 update

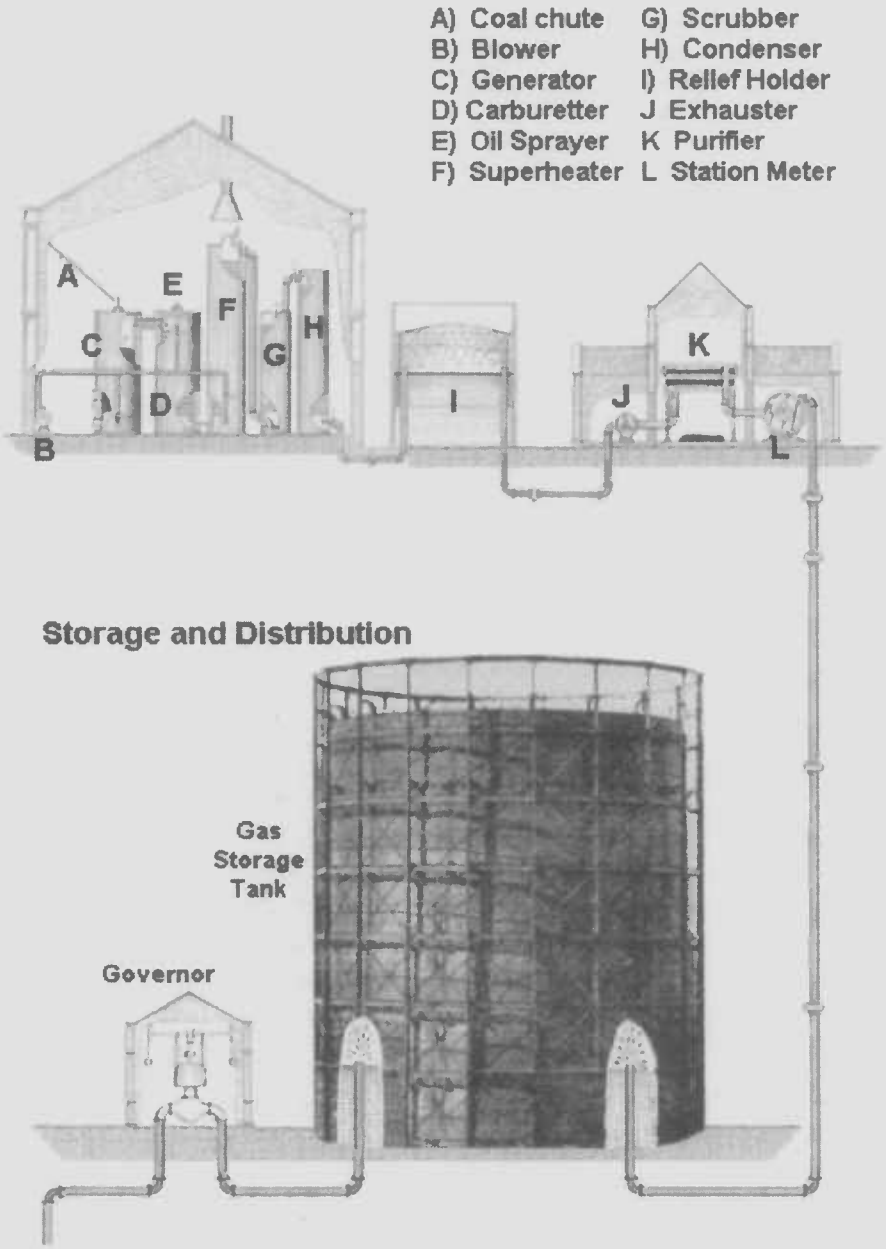

Figure 8 Typical Manufacturing Process

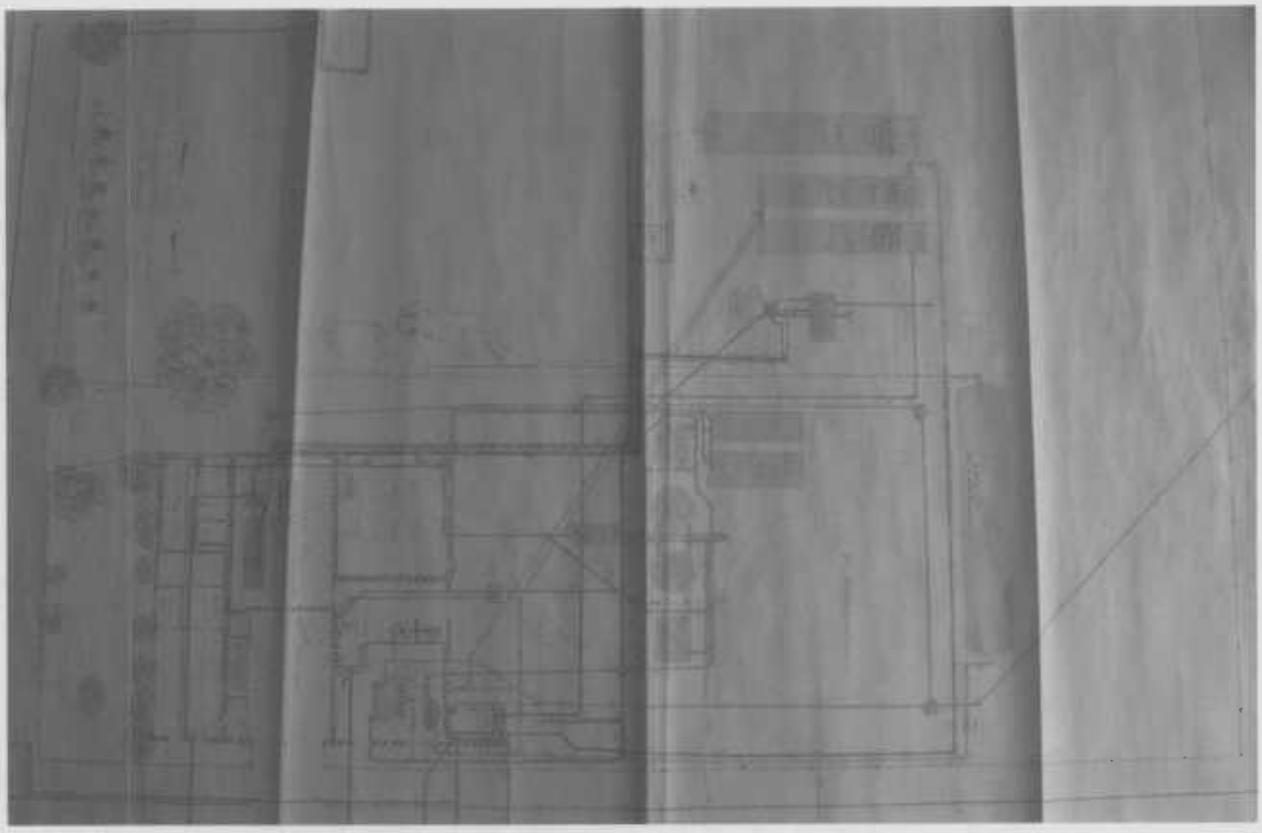

Figure 9 Easton Gas Plant; 1961 drawing

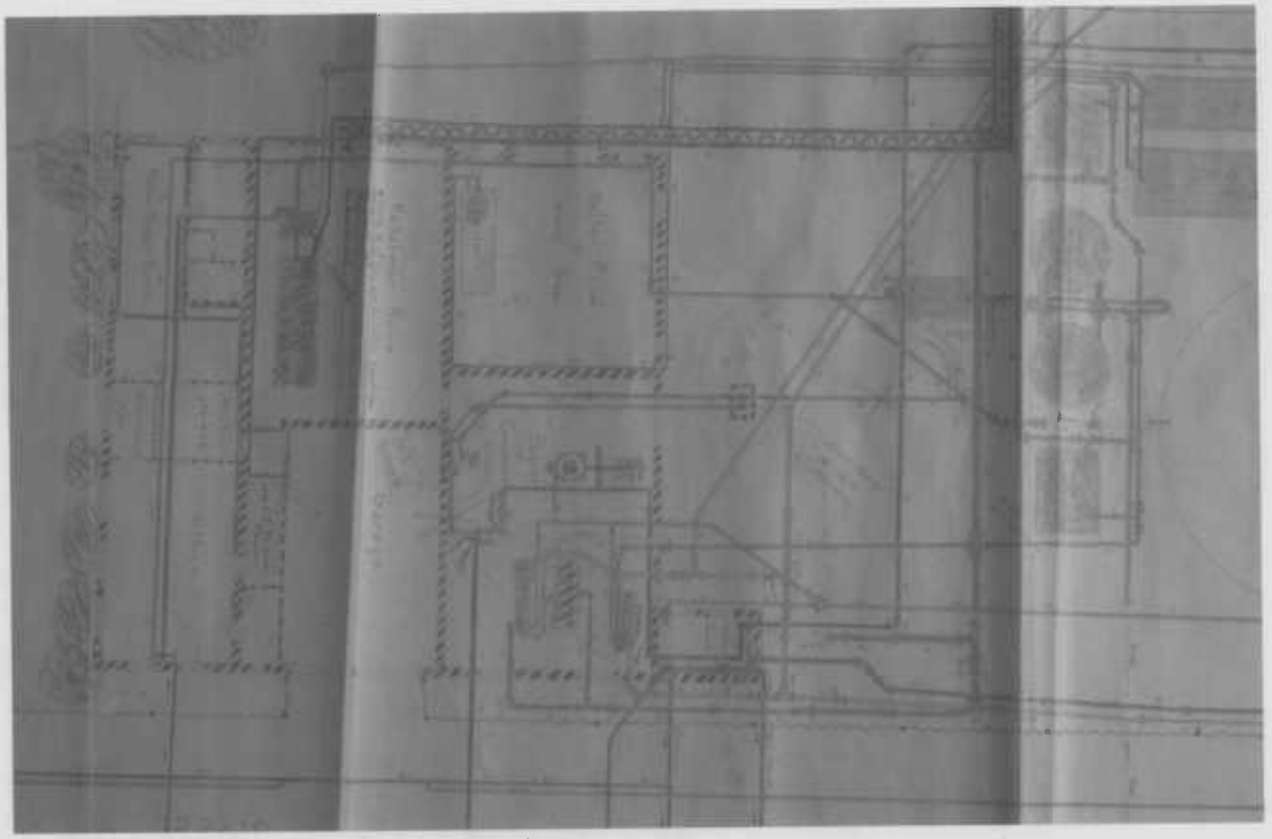

Figure 10 Easton Gas Plant; 1981 drawing

8. Significance

Inventory No. T-1156

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

Specific dates	1934	**Architect/Builder**	unknown
Construction dates	1934		

Evaluation for:

X National Register _____ Maryland Register _____ 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.)
The Easton Gas Plant was constructed on a parcel of land that has been used to manufacture gas for heating and lighting in Easton since 1860. The current building was constructed in 1934 to replace an older building and to house equipment which reflected the change in gas manufacturing technology at that period. The building was used to manufacture gas until 1955. Since that time, it has been used by the Town of Easton/Easton Utilities to provide work and office space for the Town's gas system. The building was closed in 2001 when a new building was constructed elsewhere in Town. The Easton Gas Plant is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as an extension of the existing Easton Historic District which includes property on the east side of South West Street and directly across from this facility. The Easton Gas Plant is eligible under criterion A as an example of a municipal utility and a manufactured gas plant that was important to the growth and development of Easton from its initial operation in 1860 to 1955 but specifically for this building which was used for gas manufacture from 1934 to 1955.

Available secondary sources do not show when the Easton Gas Plant became operational. Based on the existing date stone or marquee on the façade of the current building, it would appear that operations started in 1860. The plant is shown on the 1877 Lake, Griffen, and Stevenson Atlas of Talbot County. This property atlas shows the gas works as having three buildings and a large gasholder. The first available Sanborn Fire Insurance map for the Town of Easton was published in 1885. At that time, the complex consisted of the main gas plant, a shop, a windmill house, the iron gas holder, a building or open storage for coal. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, the gas plant remained fairly stable. The shop on the West Street or east side of the property was removed between 1919 and 1901. It is likely that this building was removed to accommodate significant changes at the gas plant.

From the beginning, the gas plant was privately owned and sold its product to the Easton community. This was a common practice for this type of municipal utility and reflects a common pattern from the early nineteenth century of private ownership of internal improvements and infrastructure. The most common form of this type of ownership were canals, roads, and railroads. Manufactured gas was introduced into the United States at the end of the eighteenth century when an Italian manufacturer of fireworks known as M. Amboise Company experimented with gas illumination in Philadelphia. Gas for lighting was also show in 1802 at a fair or show in Richmond, Virginia. Individual experiments and demonstrations continued for the next several years. The first commercial manufactured gas plant was established in Baltimore, Maryland in 1816. This plant provided gas for dwellings and shops and for street lighting. It appears as if the plant was located near the harbor.

Based on the success of this plant, manufactured gas plants were built in all of the major cities of the United States. Larger cities such as Philadelphia and New York had numerous plants. As the technology proved itself and as the cost of construction was reduced, smaller cities and town also began to want a manufactured gas plant. The creation of a plant was seen as a point of civic pride and evidence of modern achievement. Easton's plant was the first on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and preceded the development of a gas manufacturing plant in Cambridge by thirty years.

The original Easton gas plant was a coal carbonization plant. Coal was heated in closed ovens. The gas from this heating process was collected and processed to sent by pipes to nearby homes, stores, government offices, and other customer sources. The coal gas was cooled and purified before being placed into an iron tank located near the process equipment. The gas was kept under pressure to ensure even and active flow to the plant's customers. The coal that was used to produce the gas had been converted into coke which

burned much hotter than coal and was actively sought by local industries in the larger cities. It is not clear if there was a local demand for coke in Easton. There were some steam sawmills and other steam-operated equipment but these might have been using wood or coal rather than coke. If there was not a local demand for coke, the excess most likely would have been shipped by boat to Baltimore or simply dumped locally if there was not a steady and reliable market for Easton's coke and other byproducts of gas manufacture.

The Easton Gas Plant continued to be privately owned until 1922. In 1919, S.M. Kitzmiller purchased the plant. He removed the existing building or altered it to accommodate a new process for making gas. Kitzmiller installed equipment to produce gas using the carburetted-water method. The carburetted process had been developed in the 1870s and was widely used for new plants. These plants were cheaper and easier to operate but they required an extensive alteration to the buildings and new equipment. The Sanborn Fire Insurance map for 1919 shows the new building or the altered building that Kitzmiller built in Easton. The field staff that prepared the map also showed some of the internal equipment installed at that time. Kitzmiller operated this plant until 1922 when he sold the property and the plant to the Town of Easton.

Easton had begun to generate its own electricity in 1887. The electric plant was acquired by the Town in 1915. Just prior to that, the Town had begun to install a municipal water and sewage system. In an effort to provide a full range of municipal services, the Town purchased the gas plant in 1922. They operated the old plant until 1934 with little changes to the building or to the process of manufacturing gas. In 1934, the Town of Easton replaced the existing building and equipment with new equipment based on the carburetted process. The Town operated the gas plant on West Street until 1955. At that time, they shifted to the use of natural gas rather than manufacture their own gas. The shift away from the use of locally manufactured gas had been growing since before World War II when there were extensive shortages of the raw materials to make gas. Many municipal gas-manufacturing plants were closed in the 1920s and the 1930s. Easton's gas plant was among the last in Maryland to be closed.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. T-1156

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property .75 acres
Acreage of historical setting .75 acres
Quadrangle name Easton Quadrangle scale: _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

This property includes only the building and the immediate area for a total of .75 acres. The area that was once included as part of the larger gas plant operation has been converted into parking areas and to use for the Easton Police Department Headquarterers.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title Stephen G. Del Sordo; Historian/Architectural Historian

organization Heritage Resource Group, Inc. date 15 December 2002

street & number 305 Oakley Street telephone 410-228-8934

city or town Cambridge state Maryland, 21613

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

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. T-1156

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

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Gas Plant

Talbot County, MD

Steve Del Sorte

Dec 2002

MDE

View from SW

Tr No 6
Section Gas Plant
Talbot County, MD
Steve Del Sordo
Dec 2002
MOE

interior; equipment room; view from NE

4/8

F-1156
Easton Gas Plant
Talbot [illegible]
Steve DelSordo
Dec 2002
MDE

Interior; Secondary process [illegible]

5 of 8

T-1156

Easton Gas Plant

Talbot County, MD

Steve Del Sordo

Dec 2002

MDE

Interior, no entry

6/8

room, view from [illegible]

T-1156

Easton Gas Plant

Talbot County, MD

Steve DiJonno

Dec 2002

MDE

Interior; primary Rhodes [illegible] [illegible]

1/8

— 1156

Easton Gas Plant

Talbot County, MD

Steve Del Sordo

Dec 2002

MDE

Interior; 2nd Floor; meter Room

8/8

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
East St at Dover St
Easton
Talbot County, MD
Tom Miller
MD SHPO
View from E - entrance
2 of 27

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Dover St
Easton
Talbot County, MD
Tom Miller
MD SHPO
view from E - 1st floor
3 of 27

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Dover St
Easton
Talbot County, MD

T-1156

Easton Gas Plant

West St at Dover St

Easton

Talbot County, MD

Tom [illegible]

MD SHPO

view from N

[illegible]

Kodak 40 SW

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Depot St
Easton
MD SHPO
View from W

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
west st at Dover St
Easton
Talbot County, MD
Tom Miller
MD SHPO
View from W
8 of 27

Tal 56

Easton Gas Plant

West [illegible] Dover St

Easton

Talbot Co [illegible]

Tom Miller

MD [illegible]

view from SW

9/01/27

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St & Dover St
Easton
Talbot County, MD
Tom Miller
MD SHPO
Photos
10 of 27

Kodak SAFETY

F-1156

Easton Gas Plant

West St & Dover Rd

Easton

Talbot County, MD

Tom Miller

MD SHPO

T-456
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Queen St
Easton
Talbot County
Tom [illegible]
MD SHPO
1st floor office
view from [illegible]

T-1 FG
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Dover St
Easton
Talbot County, MD
Tom Miller
MD SHPO
1st floor office
[illegible] SE
[illegible]

T-1156

Easton Gas Plant

West St at Dover St

Easton

Talbot County, MD

Tom Miller

MD SHPO

1st floor - ~~en~~ side entrance hall

view from N

15 of 27

Kodak 400TMY

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
west st at Dover st
Easton
Talbot county, MD
Tom Iliff
MD SHPO
1st floor - process room
view from NW
17 of 27

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Dover St
Easton,
Talbot County, MD
Tom Miller
MD SHPO
1st floor process room
View from NE
18 of 27

Kodak 400TMY

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Dover St

Tom Miller

MD SHPO

1st floor - [illegible] Process Room

[illegible]

[illegible]

=1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Lower St
Easton
Talbot County, MD

Tom Miller
MD SHPO
1st floor - manufacture room
reactions
25 [illegible]

1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Dover St
Easton

Talbot Grant, MD
Tom Miller

MD SHPO

Mallows Manufacture Boom
Location [illegible]

[illegible]

Kodak 400TMY

T-1156
Easton Gas Plant
West St at Dover St
Easton
Talbot County, MD
Town Miller
MD SHPO
2nd floor - repair room
view from NW

T-1156

Easton Gas Plant

West St at Duke St

Easton

Talbot County, D

Tom Miller

MD 5440

[illegible] Open room

[illegible] from [illegible]

[illegible]