Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 36-52

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic: Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department

other: Old Silver Spring Armory

2. Location

street and number: 8131 Georgia Ave. ___ not for publication

city, town: Silver Spring ___ vicinity

county: Montgomery

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

name

street and number telephone

city, town: Silver Spring state: Maryland zip code: 20910

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Montgomery County Circuit Court (deeds) liber folio

city, town: Rockville tax map: JN32 tax parcel: P316 tax ID number: 00973233

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
__X__ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
_____ Other:_____

6. Classification

Category
_____district
__X__building(s)
_____structure
_____site
_____object

Ownership
__X__public
_____private
_____both

Current Function
_____agriculture
_____commerce/trade
_____defense
_____domestic
_____education
_____funerary
__X__government
_____health care
_____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
		Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

_____

7. Description

Inventory No. M:36-52

Condition

X excellent ___ deteriorated
___ 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.

The Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department building is a front-gabled, Colonial Revival Style structure three bays wide and nine bays deep with the rear bay being a two-story flat roofed section. The building possesses a good degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, having been altered during its history when use changed from an armory to a fire station.

This building is a 1-story brick, front-gabled structure that is three bays wide. It is executed in the Colonial Revival Style. The front gable is laid in Flemish Bond. The peak of the front gable has a bull's eye window with limestone surround and voussoirs on top, bottom, and sides. The roofline cornice is constructed of stamped copper with ogee and dentils pattern. The front gable cornice returns at the sides. The front doors consist of three identical steel overhead doors, each having a single horizontal band consisting of three windows. The sides of the façade are brick with a limestone base. The left side of the front façade has a limestone plaque that reads: "Silver Spring Vol. Fire Dept. Org. May 15, 1915 – Inc. June 11, 1918."

The north side of the building faces Silver Spring Avenue. It consists of nine bays, eight of which are under the gable roof. The ninth, or rear bay is a two-story, flat roofed section with a large overhead door and quadruple second story window bay having 1/1 sashes capped by a cornice with dentil molding. Atop the flat roof is a tall antenna structure.

The eight bay façade of the gabled section consists of bays separated by brick pilasters that define the bays. The posts terminate at the roof overhang except for the easternmost post . It houses a chimney that extends above the roofline. Bay openings consist of a mixture of doors and windows with Colonial Revival styling. The rear bay of the gabled section is an entrance door with closed pediment roof with wood architrave trim and louvered vent. The second and third bays from the rear of this section are paired 1/1 double-hung windows with aluminum sashes that are late-twentieth century replacements. The fourth bay from the front is a steel entrance door, with no trim or pediment. Fifth from the rear of this section is a bay that once held a double entrance door but now houses a fixed-sash window surrounded by stucco panels. This bay is recessed and retains its original wide concrete step. The sixth bay from the rear of the gabled section has a steel entrance door similar to the rear entrance bay. The two bays near Georgia Avenue are paired 6/1 double-hung aluminum sashes. Although the windows are replacements, they are similar to those in a photograph of the building taken in the 1920s.

The roof is clad with standing seam metal and has three evenly spaced gabled louvered vents protruding from the center of its slope. The south side of the building has a brick tower that has a steel structure supporting a large lighted # 1.

In comparison with photographs from the 1920s, the change in façade can easily be seen. The original building had a Gothic Revival façade with a central brick parapett finished with a castellated limestone cap that was typical for armory architecture of this time. The front brick façade was three bays wide, having six-over-six double-hung windows and a large central entrance. The top of the façade was

square with a central bay about ten feet higher than the side bays. Tall vertical brick posts flanked each bay. The posts at each end of the façade extended about two feet higher than the castellated capstones. The central bay had a large door opening and a triplet of -over-six double hung windows with an arched louver vent above the windows. In comparison with historic photographs with the present structure, it is evident that the limestone base of the original façade was incorporated into the new structure.

8. Significance

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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	X 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 1915, 1927

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 Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department was originally constructed as the Silver Spring Armory. The building is significant for its association with Captain Frank Hewitt, Sr., and Colonel E. Brooke Lee, two founding fathers, leading business and political figures in Silver Spring. It is also significant for its association with two important community institutions- the military unit that fought in World War I and the first fire department. Although the building was altered significantly in 1927 upon its conversion from an armory to fire station, the alterations exemplify the rapid growth and changes in Silver Spring at the height of transformation from rural village to booming suburban community.

There was no organized fire protection until 1915 when the Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department (originally the "Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Company") was established. A fire that destroyed the Silver Spring Post Office in May of that year precipitated the organization of the Fire Department. According to writer Mildred Getty, the "Ladies Cooperative Improvement Society" of Silver Spring assisted the men in the community in forming the fire company. Money was solicited door-to-door and the first building was actually a shed behind the new Armory owned by J. Herbert Cissel.[1] Initial equipment was crude, including the "first truck" which was built from wheels made out of discarded drain grills found at the Hunter Brothers hardware store. Other equipment consisted of two ladders and 15 hand extinguishers. Hoses were unnecessary since there was no public water supply. The ladders were stored in a shed behind the Silver Spring Armory, then at the southeast corner of Georgia Avenue and Silver Spring Avenue."[2]

The Silver Spring Armory housed the 1st Infantry, 29th Division of Company K, during World War I. The militia as an organized unit of the military was a product the 1904 National Militia Act, or the "Dick Act", named after its sponsor, Ohio Congressman Charles Dick. It mandated that the National Guard "maintain authorized manpower strengths, adhere to the Articles of War, train two days per month, and

[1] Mildred Getty, "The Silver Spring Area", in *The Montgomery County Story*, published by the Montgomery County Historical Society, p. 6, Vol. XI, No. 2 February 1969.
[2] Robert E. Oshel, "Early Silver Spring and Sligo" published by the Woodside Park Civic Association Silver Spring, Maryland, 1998.

undertake a summer encampment of at least five days in duration."[3] Additionally, the 1916 National Defense Act increased funding and the duties of the National Guard.

E. Brooke Lee and Frank L. Hewitt constructed the Silver Spring Armory starting in 1914 after the organization of Company K of the 1st Maryland Infantry. E. Brooke Lee, large landowner and nascent developer when he subdivided 19 acres in 1921, was also involved with the National Guard in Silver Spring. He was known as "The Colonel" because of his National Guard rank.[4] Hewitt was also a major land developer and member and early president of the Silver Spring Businessmen's Association. He served as second lieutenant and the company's first officer.[5]

During this time, the building, which was constructed in the Gothic Revival Style for use as an armory, was a gabled structure with a tall brick castellated parapet front that was typical for armory architecture of this time. A photograph from the mid-1920s on file at the M-NCPPC, Historic Preservation Division, shows the architecture clearly. The front brick façade was three bays wide, having double-hung windows and a large central entrance. The top of the façade was square with a central bay about ten feet higher than the side bays, creating the castellated effect. The top of the front façade was capped with corbelled brick, and what appears to be concrete or sandstone.

Company K ran patrols along the Rio Grande at Eagle Pass, Texas in the summer of 1916 after "Pancho" Villa's raid into New Mexico, and the company sent 150 men to Camp McClellan, Alabama in August 1917 for ten months of training. They were known as Company K of the 115th Infantry, 29th Division. This division served on the border of Germany and Switzerland, controlling the Belfort Gap. In the fall of 1918, they were ordered to capture the German rail network during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, and with a cost of 1,052 casualties and 131 dead, captured the Consenvoye Heights and the Borne de Cornouilles along with over 1,500 enemy troops. During the war, Silver Spring's Company K lost 41 men out of their original 150.[6]

Colonel E. Brooke Lee came from an illustrious family that included a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Richard Henry Lee, Maryland and Virginia governors, diplomats, a postmaster general,

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[3] Joseph M. Balkoski, *The Maryland National Guard: A History of Maryland's Military Forces, 1634-1991.* Baltimore, MD. As quoted in: William Bushong, Silver Spring Armory Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 1994.
[4] Montgomery County Maryland, Our History and Government Montgomery County, Maryland and the Montgomery County Historical Society, 1999.
[5] "Captain Frank Lee Hewitt, Sr.," Unpublished Biographical Sketch, John P. Hewitt Files, Located at the Hewitt Real Estate Office, Silver Spring, Maryland. As found in: William Bushong, Silver Spring Armory Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 1994.
[6] William Bushong, Silver Spring Armory Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 1994.

and congressmen. He was a powerful figure in Maryland politics and business, creating new suburbs out of family-owned estates and served as Secretary of State of Maryland in 1923 and 1924. He served in the Maryland House of Delegates in 1926, and served as House Speaker for the legislature from 1928 through 1931.[7]

Frank L. Hewitt started as a grocery store owner around 1903 with a small general store on Georgia Avenue (then known as the Brookville Pike) in the area that is now Silver Spring. Hewitt also expanded into real estate development and began by constructing three brick houses on Sligo Avenue east of Fenton Street. He convinced the Potomac Electric Power Company to extend its lines to Silver Spring. He served as Silver Spring's postmaster in 1906, and became prominent in Republican Party politics. Seeing the need for financial capital, he became an organizer, partner, and vice-president of the Silver Spring National Bank (Suburban Trust Company). He later founded the Citizen Savings and Loan Association in 1929. In addition to serving as a member of the National Guard at the Armory, he served as a member of the Volunteer Fire Department when it was organized in 1915.[8]

In 1927, a new armory building was being constructed on Wayne Avenue. The 1927 Sanborn shows the building with the rear three quarters serving as the armory, and the front quarter, apparently newly remodeled, housing the fire department. After the 1927 dedication of the new Armory, the old Silver Spring Armory on the southeast corner of Georgia Avenue and Silver Spring Avenue was converted for use as a fire station. This conversion included the demolition of the Gothic Revival façade. It was replaced with gabled front executed in the Colonial Revival Style.

The Department moved into its new station with two trucks, the newest of which could pump 350 gallons per minute. In 1944 the Department was the first in the area to equip its trucks with two-way radios, and in the 1940s the Department had eight pieces of equipment, including a relatively scarce ladder truck and it operated a rescue squad vehicle.[9]

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Robert E. Oshel, "Early Silver Spring and Sligo" Published by the Woodside Park Civic Association Silver Spring, 1998.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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William Bushong, Silver Spring Armory Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 1994.

Robert E. Oshel, "Early Silver Spring and Sligo" Published by the Woodside Park Civic Association Silver Spring, 1998.

Sanborn Map Company, Washington Suburban, Volume 1 E, Maryland.

Joseph M. Balkoski, *The Maryland National Guard: A History of Maryland's Military Forces, 1634-1991.* Baltimore, MD.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	00.12		
Acreage of historical setting	00.12		
Quadrangle name	Washington West	Quadrangle scale:	1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries for the Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department/Old Armory consist of the entire 00.12 acre parcel bounded on the north by Silver Spring Street, on the west by Georgia Avenue, and on the east by an alley. This is the historical boundary and setting of the property and nearly synonomous with the building footprint.

11. Form Prepared by

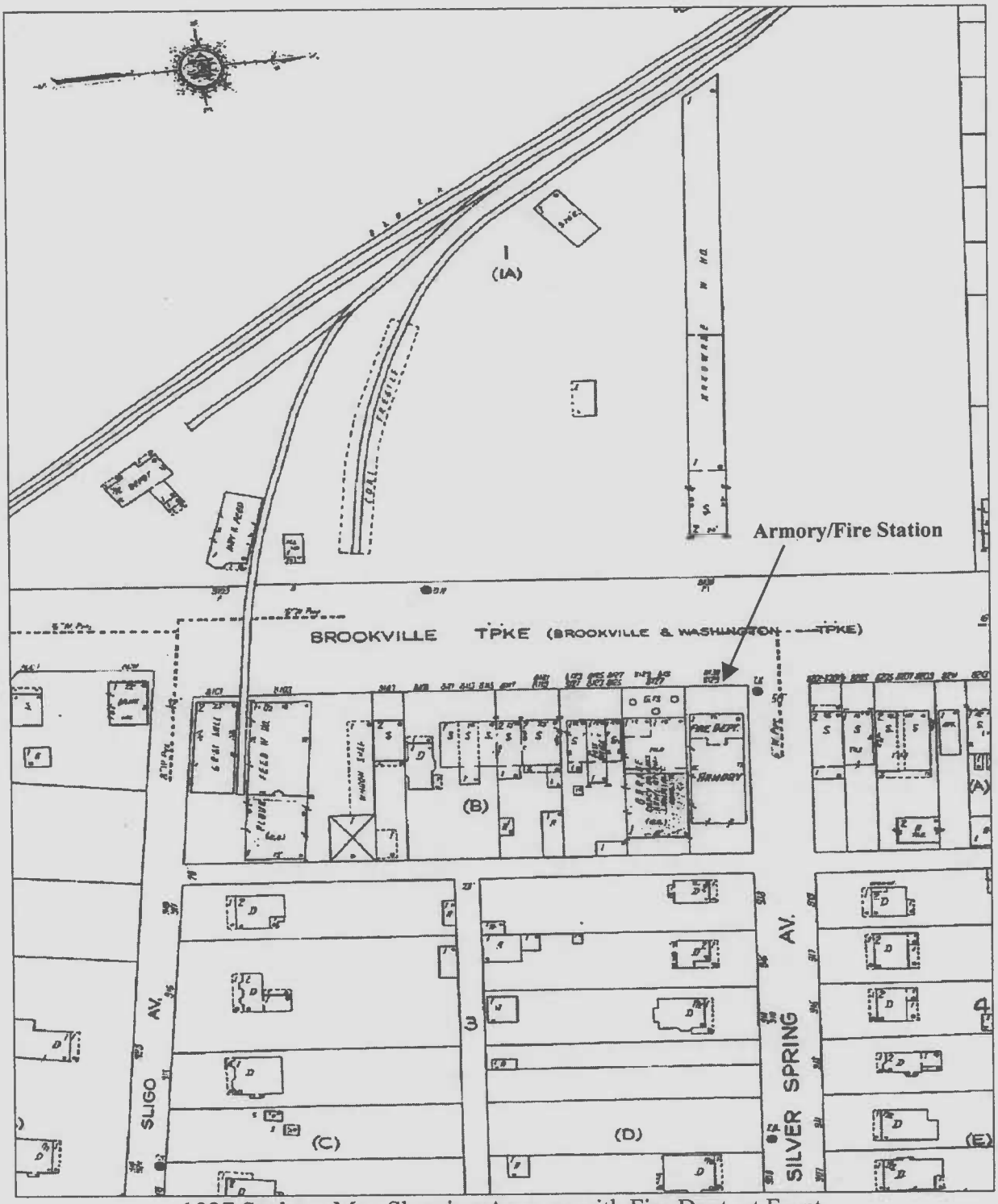
name/title	David C. Berg, Architectural Historian		
organization		date	October 15, 2002
street & number	R. R. 1, Box 16	telephone	570-465-2614
city or town	Susquehanna	state	Pennsylvania

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

M:36-52



1927 Sanborn Map Showing Armory with Fire Dept. at Front.

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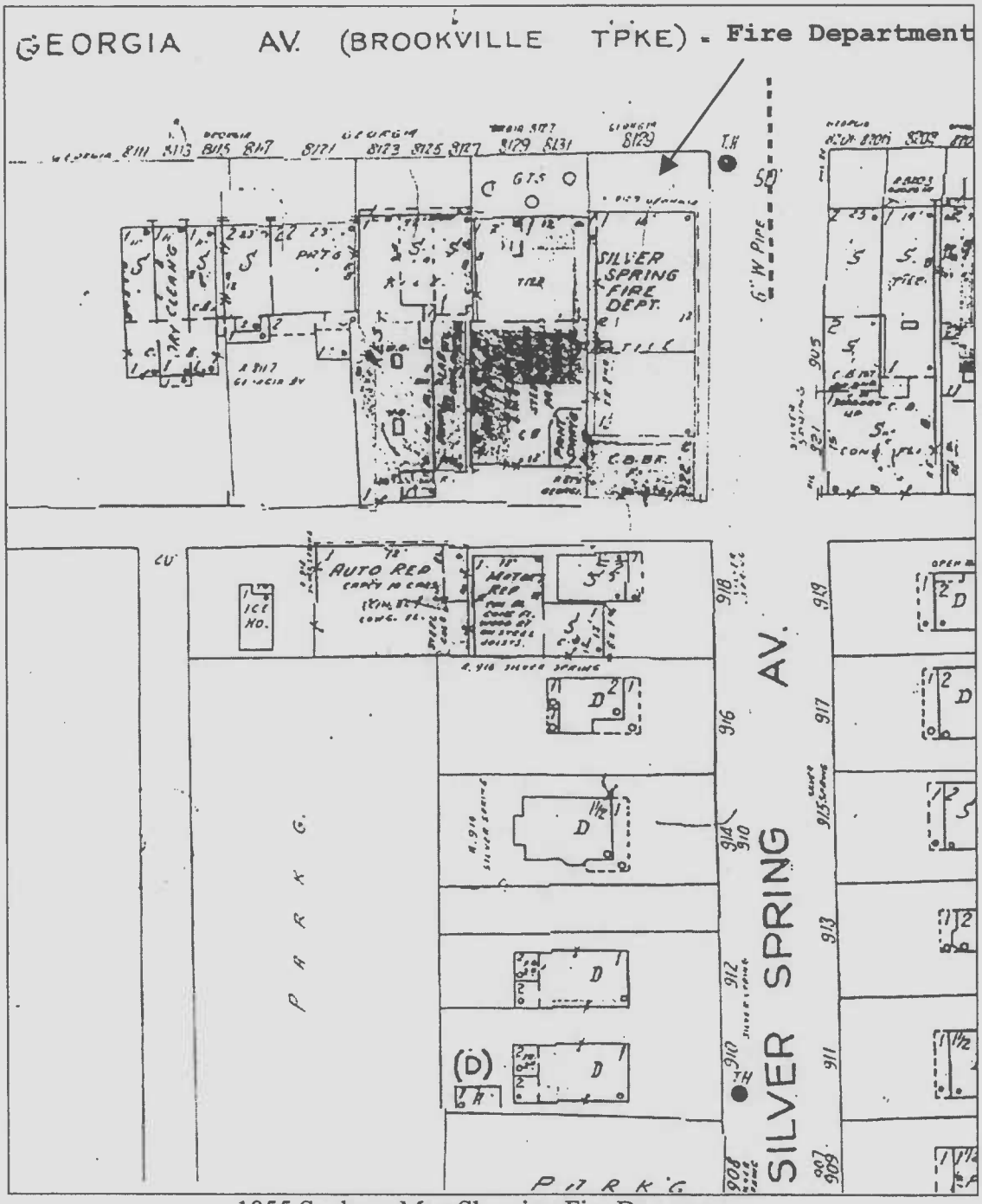
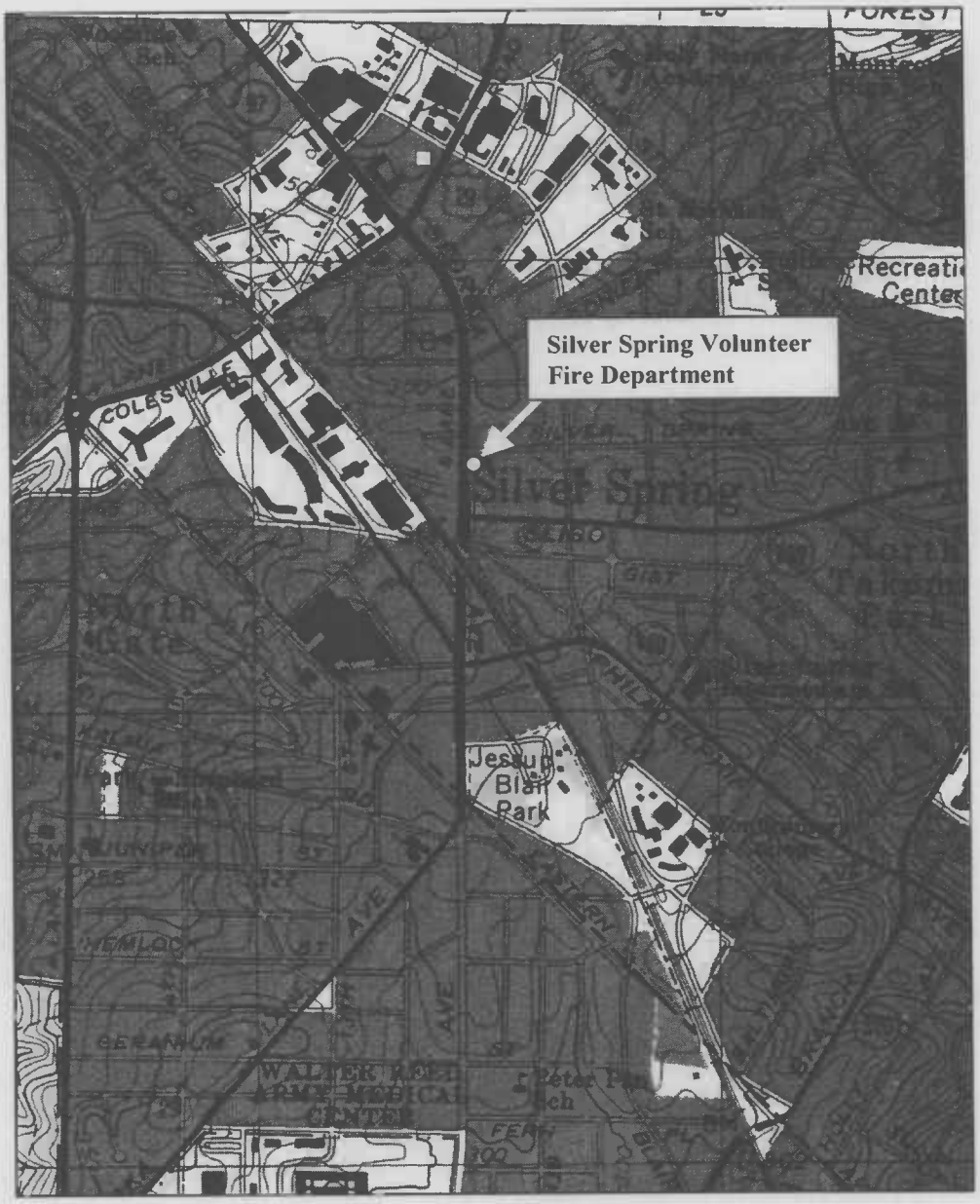


1955 Sanborn Map Showing Fire Department.

Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department
Silver Spring
Montgomery County

MIHP No. M: 36-52
Washington West



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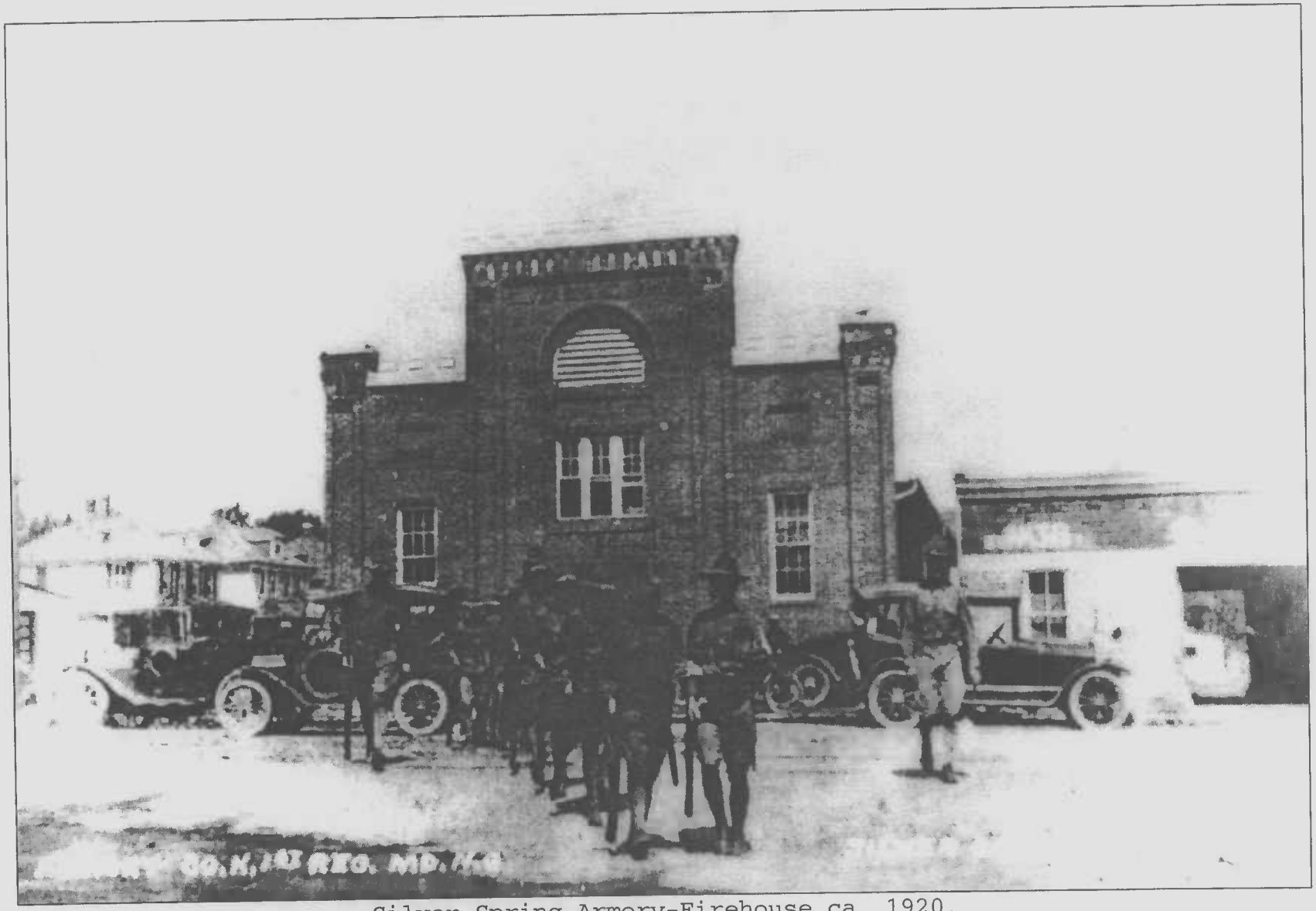

Silver Spring Armory-Firehouse ca. 1920.

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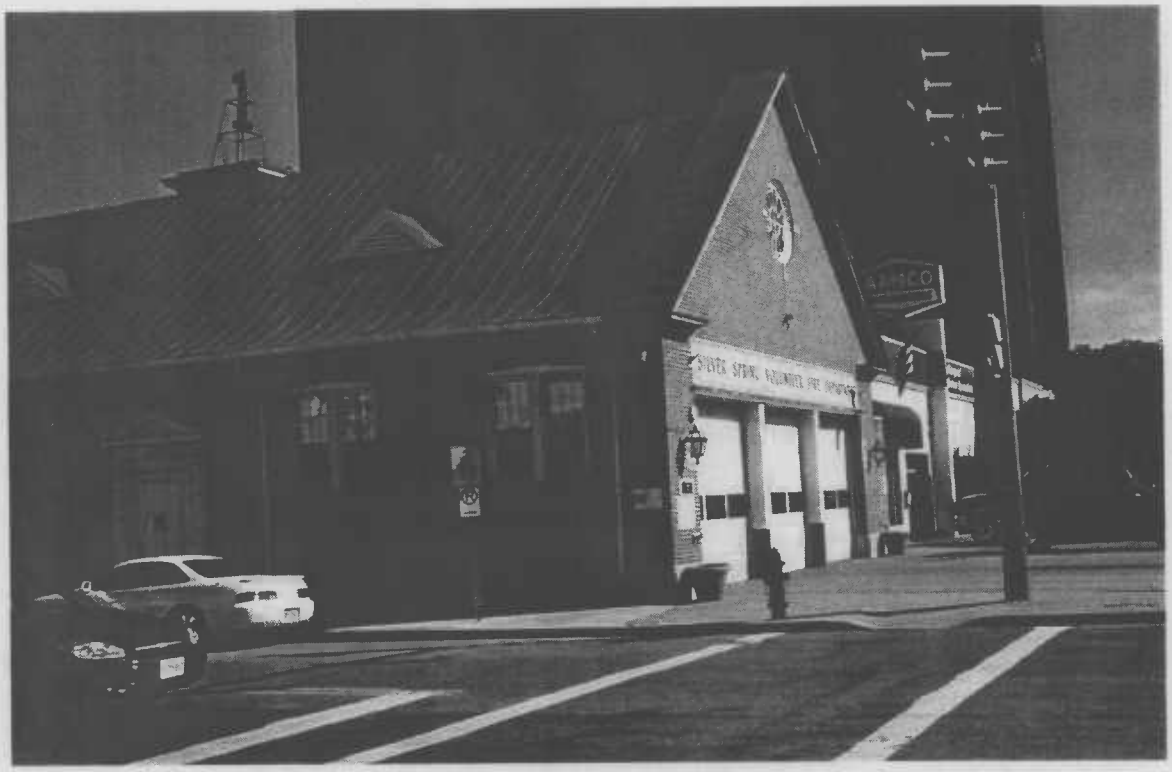
8131 Georgia Ave S