

Chapter I

Introduction

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN ROCKVILLE

Initial Preservation Efforts: 1965-1974

In June 1965 the Mayor and Council endorsed the creation of the Rockville Historic District Commission. One year later, Ordinance No. 28-66 established a seven-member commission and authorized it to recommend historic districts. The Commission outlined a historic district in March 1967 that extended along West Montgomery and Forest Avenues, and North Adams and South Van Buren Streets. Six individual structures also were recommended: the Bingham/Brewer House (1821) on Great Falls Road, Wire Hardware Store (1890), Christ Episcopal Church (1880-84), St. Mary's Catholic Church (1817), Rockville Academy (1890), and B & O Railroad Station (1873).

Three years later in January 1971, the Mayor and Council authorized the preparation of an ordinance to formally recognize and designate the recommended districts and structures. The ordinance, however, was postponed so that more research could be conducted. In October 1972, the Historic District Commission was reorganized and granted the authority stated in Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland to oversee the established historic districts. The Planning and Zoning Ordinance became the local enabling legislation by which the Commission was to exercise its authority. In March 1973, Warren J. Cox, architect and partner of Hartman-Cox, Architects of Washington was retained as a consultant to study the earlier recommendations and to verify their historic context.

Through the work of Mr. Cox three areas were proposed for historic district designation: West Montgomery Avenue (as recommended earlier), South Washington Street, and B & O Railroad Station. On April 15, 1974, the Mayor and Council unanimously designated these districts through Sectional Zoning Map Amendments (Ordinances No. 12-74 and 13-74). In December 1974, however, the Mayor and Council revised the Planning and Zoning Ordinance and altered the West Montgomery Avenue and B & O Station Historic District boundaries. The 1891 Courthouse and a house located at 541 Beall Avenue were added as single-unit historic districts at the same time. In addition, the Mayor and Council reduced the Historic District Commission to five and stipulated that the chair would be appointed to one-year, non-succeeding terms by the Mayor.

Renewed Initiatives in Preservation: 1976-1983

In August 1976, the Planning Department, with Mayor and Council approval, contracted with Dr. Anatole Senkevitch, a professor of architecture and history from the University of Maryland, to develop a preliminary historic preservation plan and architectural guidelines for existing historic districts. Students from the University of Maryland were hired on a part-time basis to survey, research, and analyze five pre-selected project areas. The first area included the existing historic districts of West Montgomery Avenue, South Washington Street, and the Courthouse. The four remaining areas included Baltimore Road east of the B & O Railroad Station, Park Avenue south of Jefferson Street, "Haiti" on Martin's Lane and North Street, and Lincoln Park. Over three hundred structures and environmental

amenities were surveyed. These became the basis for the City's initial inventory of historic properties. Dr. Senkevitch also prepared, with the Planning Department, a Rockville Historic Districts Preliminary Preservation Plan that introduced the concept of five levels of buffer or transitional zones; Design Guidelines for the Exterior Rehabilitation of Structures in Rockville's Historic Districts were prepared at the same time and subsequently adopted by the Historic District Commission as standards to guide in the administration of HDC Certificates of Approval.

The Historic District Commission submitted to the Planning Commission in 1980 the first "Historic Preservation Action Program." This resulted in revisions to the 1970 Master Plan by the addition of a chapter on historic preservation. In January 1983 the Historic District Commission released an updated "Action Program" recommending five items:

- (1) Alterations to the boundaries of the existing historic districts and addition of the Dawson Farm Historic District;
- (2) Sidewalk improvements in the historic districts;
- (3) Design recommendations for the B & O Railroad Station Historic District;
- (4) Continuing historical research; and,
- (5) A tax credit program for improvements in historic districts.

These items have been used to informally guide the Historic District Commission work program since 1983.

Recent Efforts in Preservation: 1984-Present

In 1984 the Planning Department contacted Dr. Richard Longstreth, Director of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at George Washington University, to establish a cooperative program. The purpose was to improve the City's inventory of historic properties begun by Dr. Senkevitch and assist the Commission in organizing a preservation program to be funded by the Maryland Historical Trust. The resultant three-year Historic Preservation Action Program 1985 was authorized by the Mayor and Council and jointly funded by the City and the Maryland Historical Trust as part of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program.

A preservation planner was hired on contract in February 1985 to develop and implement the 1985 Program. This included research on historic properties, with assistance from Peerless Rockville and George Washington University graduate students, preparation of a historic resources management plan with an ad hoc Preservation Advisory Committee, and development of several public education items. The management plan, the major part of the 1985 Program, is to be used to give direction to the Commission and serve as a catalyst for expanding historic preservation interests in the City. The plan provides the framework for the city's historic contexts, which will continue to be developed in line with

Maryland Historical Trust/ National Park Service Standards, as statistical analysis, research, and survey work progresses.

Goals of the Planning Process

The goals of this study are to identify the historic resources in the City of Rockville, to present recommendations and implementation steps to protect and preserve the historic resources, and to coordinate the management of the City's historic resources through the Rockville Historic District Commission.

The Planning Model

The Resource Protection Planning Process (RP3), devised by the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1980 and codified in 1983 in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning (See Appendix H), is the model used in this study. The planning process is designed to advance historic preservation interests by integrating preservation planning with comprehensive and land use planning processes. RP3 consists of three parts: historic contexts, an operating plan, and a management plan.

A historic context is a synopsis of the development of a geographic area in a period of time. When the historic contexts are combined, they form a chronological sequence that shows broad patterns of local, regional, and state development.

An operating plan evaluates each historic resource identified in the historic contexts. It emphasizes the temporal setting and presents recommendations for the enhancement of the context through preserving the associated resources.

A management plan sets priorities for the historic resources in a geographic context by using the planning areas developed for local land use decision-making. It examines the stresses on these resources, collectively or individually, and highlights the assets and liabilities of the planning areas in regard to the resources.

The RP3 model emphasizes the management of historic resources and broad-based citizen participation. The planning process is strengthened by the involvement of archeologists, architectural historians, architects, historians, folklorists, and planners with an interest in historic preservation. These individuals help to ensure broad coverage of the historic resources and recommend management techniques.

RP3 leads to a flexible plan that allows adjustments and additions to be made after the initial planning exercise is completed. New information or changes in the status of historic resources may be incorporated without outdateding the plan. Future context development will provide statistical analysis of property types and further analysis of data gaps and stresses. Priorities will then be determined by the urgency of stresses and need to fill data gaps.

Principal Users

The principal user of this historic resources management plan is the Historic District Commission. Other potential users are the Mayor and Council, Planning Commission, Cultural Arts Commission, Planning Department, local non-profit historical and preservation organizations, civic and business associations, and citizens.

State Preservation Plan and CLG Program

In 1983 the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) of the Department of Economic and Community Development began a statewide preservation planning process using the RP3 model. The "Maryland Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan" was the result. The Maryland Plan includes state historic contexts, historic preservation statistics and data, and information on the preservation programs of the Maryland Historical Trust and others.

Parallel to the preservation planning exercise, the Trust received approval in 1985 for its Certified Local Government (CLG) procedures from the National Park Service as outlined by the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The MHT now passes through at least 10% of the state's federal preservation funding to Certified Local Governments. In order for a CLG to receive funds, it must propose a qualified project and fund one-half of the project costs.

The Mayor and Council, with the Historic District Commission as the qualified representative body, was the second CLG designated in Maryland. If this historic resources management plan is approved, Rockville will be the first CLG preservation program produced in coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust preservation plan. This introduces a new phase of local and state partnership in historic preservation.

PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF ROCKVILLE

The physical and cultural environment of the City of Rockville today results from the gradual transformation of the natural landscape existing in prehistoric times into a cultural cityscape reflecting modern urban life. Scattered remnants of the past remind us of the transformation and will continue to do so in the future, if preserved. These visible and tangible remnants are resources for creating a special community identity recalling a former time and place that is now our heritage.

Physical Setting

Maryland's Piedmont Region

Maryland is divided into three geographical divisions: the Tidewater or Coastal Plains in the east, the Piedmont in the center, and the Appalachian region in the west. (Figure 1) Bounded by the "fall line" on the east and the Catoctin Mountains on the west, the Piedmont region extends north into Pennsylvania and south into Virginia. The "fall line" marks the point where the streams flowing from the northwest cross crystalline rocks to cover the loose sedimented streambeds of the Coastal Plains. Lowland areas

align the streambeds with alluvial loams and sandy floodplains; the upland areas consist of rolling fields of fertile soils.

Maryland's Piedmont region consists of Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, and Montgomery Counties and Baltimore City.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County is bounded on the southwest by the Potomac River, the southeast by the "fall line" beginning at Great Falls, the northeast by the Patuxent River, and the northwest by surveyed diagonal from near Mt. Airy to the Potomac River above Dickerson. Parr's Ridge, at 880 feet above sea level, divides Montgomery County so that the eastern streams flow in the direction of the Chesapeake Bay and the western ones to the Potomac River. This ridge begins at its lowest elevation of 52 feet above sea level where the Potomac River enters the District of Columbia near Georgetown, formerly part of Montgomery County, and gradually rises to an elevation of over 800 feet at the northwest corner of the County. The land above the ridge is typical of the rolling uplands of the Piedmont; the land below flanks the streams with mostly sloping lowlands similar to other areas of the Piedmont.

FIGURE 1
PHYSICAL SETTING

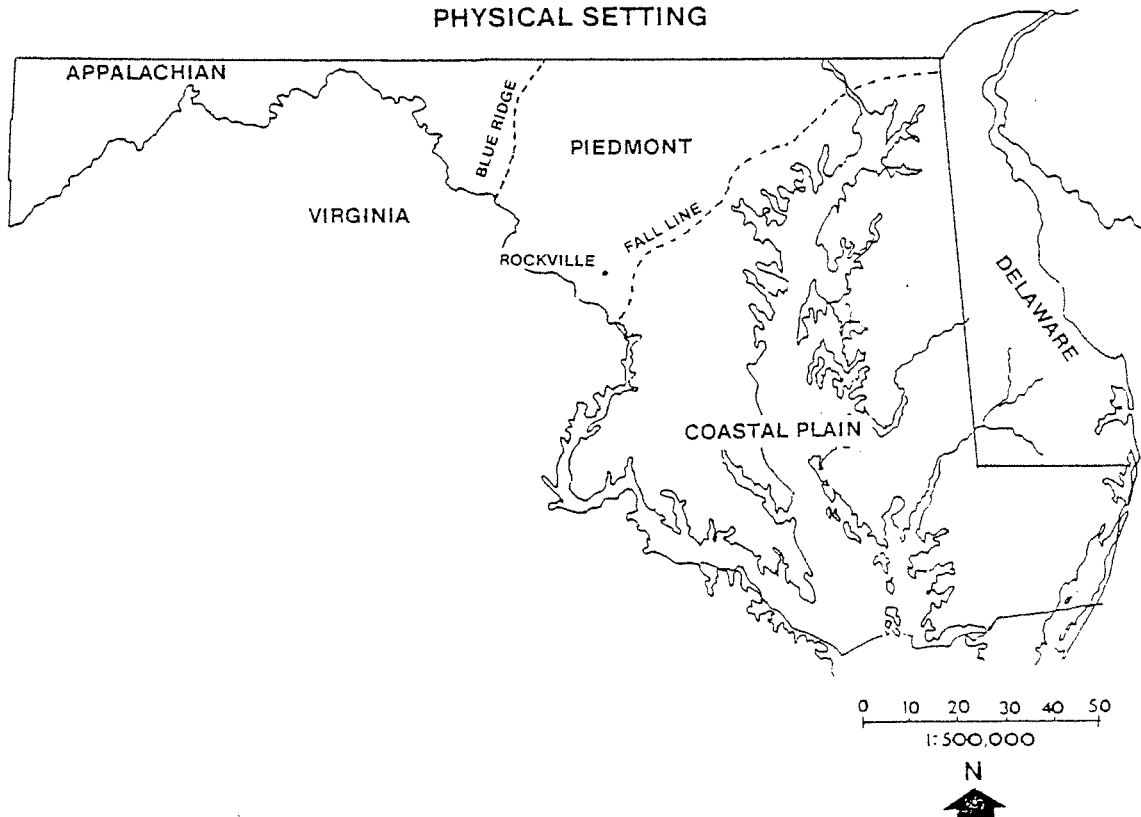
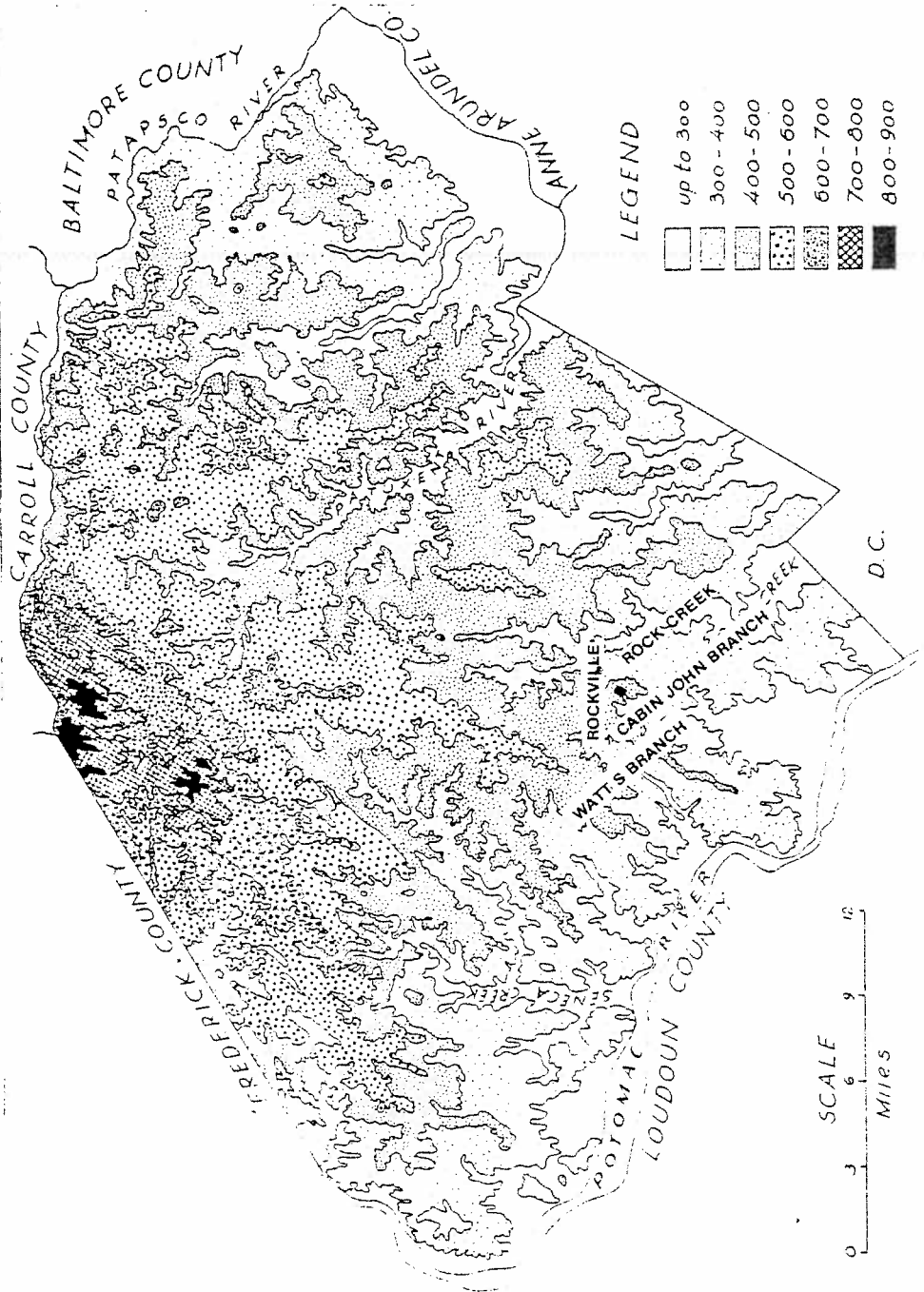


FIGURE 2

TOPOGRAPHY OF MONTGOMERY & HOWARD COUNTIES



FROM: CLARK, GEOGRAPHY OF MARYLAND, 1918, P. 8

Rockville

Rockville lies in the center of Montgomery County in central Maryland's Piedmont region. (Figure 1) The downtown is situated on a southeast point of Parr's Ridge some 450 feet above sea level. Because of this location, the present-day City contains both lowland and upland Piedmont areas in its approximately twelve square miles. Lowland areas include the linear tracts along Rock Creek, Cabin John, and Watts Branch; upland areas include the rolling terrain to the north of the downtown. (Figure 2)

These physiographic characteristics constitute a diverse physical setting that attracted prehistoric inhabitants and continued to shape more recent history. Therefore, the City boundaries encompass prehistoric sites, usually found in lowland tracts, and historic sites, generally in upland areas.

Cultural Setting

Before the arrival of Europeans, central Maryland was the base for a complex of Indians located there since the late prehistoric eras. Known today as the "Montgomery Complex", this alliance formed when migrating Indians from the west and northeast met. Their combined cultural forces introduced customs and settlement to a largely uninhabited territory.

During the 16th century, these Indians made contact with the first Europeans, primarily English. This began the first of a series of foreign influences. Although the degree of interaction remains a mystery, as the European settlements multiplied and expanded territorial control, the earlier culture appears to have become introverted. The complex eventually relocated to the east, near Piscataway, Maryland, retrenching from prolonged European contact and seeking isolation.

New cultural forces appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries when the Pennsylvania Germans settled along the Monocacy River. Their settlement, although west of Montgomery County, had a widespread influence on the Piedmont by introducing a new form of house construction and folkways that had originated in Germany. This group gradually integrated with the Maryland Tidewater English, Scottish, and Welsh settlers as they moved west in the 18th century. The Tidewater settlers too had distinctive houses and customs that reflected their heritage.

By the late 18th century, Montgomery County's cultural setting consisted of an assortment of European traditions. The small crossroads settlement that was to become Rockville served as the nucleus of the County and spread its cultural influence accordingly. The local cultural hearth was diversified by visits from travelers along the Frederick to Georgetown Road providing new stimulants. Adding to this largely European mix was the introduction of the African traditions of the slaves.

In the 19th century, Rockville began to spread its influence to an increasingly large area of the County. Typical of much of Maryland, this was a European population having traditional folkways that evolved in Europe. The conservative mindset placed emphasis on agriculture, land, and religion. The minority black population remained a shadow of the white one as it practiced white traditions modified with an African influence.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries brought a new cultural awareness. Transportation and commuter lines linked Rockville to the Washington metropolitan area, and expanded communication systems erased the miles between cities. At this time, the small town began to detach itself from the established agrarian-based European culture of Maryland and absorb new residents overflowing Washington's northwestern boundary.

The trend has continued to the present, creating a more sophisticated, urban, and international flavor as Rockville has increasingly aligned itself with the professional tempos and mixture of international cultures of the nation's capital, rather than clinging to the rural European heritage of old Maryland. With participation of such a diverse population, Rockville citizens bring a progressive approach to the City and government. Rockville is often referred to as a "balanced community and a model government." It has been given the All-America City Award four times in the past thirty years, the only city in the country to have been so awarded.