

BA-3059

Bengies African American Survey District

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

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Last Updated: 09-25-2012

CAPSULE SUMMARY

BA-3059

Bengies African American Survey District

Baltimore County, MD

1900-1950s

The Bengies African American Survey District is located on the Middle River Neck in the Fifteenth District of Baltimore County. The Bengies survey district dates to circa 1900 to the 1950s. The Bengies area is not distinguished as Bengies on the 1877 Hopkins Atlas. Along Eastern Avenue are several residences such as William H. Russell, Benjamin McComas, Jason Shultz, and William Hopkins. A school house and a church are depicted at the crossroads of Carroll Island Road and Bowley Quarters Road just south of Eastern Avenue. A 'colored schoolhouse' is denoted on the map along Eastern Avenue where the road intersects with the railroad tracks east of Earls Road (at the current location of Sharp Street Church). The 1915 Bromley Atlas depicts a 'colored' school house east of Earls Road as well as a church, the Sharp Street U.M. Church. The school house and church denoted on the 1877 map at the crossroads of Carrolls Island Road and Bowley Quarters Road are extant on the 1915 map. During the early to mid-20th century, the area of Bengies was entirely a rural agricultural landscape. Many of the farms were either pig farms or crop farms mostly growing vegetables. Similar to Chase, employment for men in Bengies was primarily for the railroad and the women worked for private families.

The eastern border of the Bengies African American Survey District begins with Sharp Street Church on Eastern Boulevard. A total of nine historic buildings are associated with the Bengies African American Survey District. A large number of buildings stand on Eastern Avenue and Carroll Island Road that date from the last half of the 20th century and are not associated with the district. Very few residential buildings stand along Eastern Avenue in Bengies. Eastern Avenue has been consumed by commercial enterprises. Side roads to Eastern Avenue in Bengies such as Earls Road and Carroll Island Road, have been developed for commercial or industrial businesses.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-3059

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Bengies African American Survey District
other

2. Location

street and number Eastern Avenue, Earls Road, Carroll Island Road not for publication
city, town Middle River X vicinity
county Baltimore County

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

name Multiple Ownership
street and number telephone Not Available
city, town state zip code

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courthouse tax map and parcel: tax maps 83,91
city, town Towson liber n/a folio n/a

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
☐ Other

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
☒ district	☐ public	☐ agriculture	Contributing Noncontributing
☐ building(s)	☒ private	☐ commerce/trade	9 37 buildings
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ defense	sites
☐ site		☒ domestic	structures
☐ object		☐ education	objects
		☐ funerary	9 37 Total
		☐ government	
		☐ health care	
		☐ industry	
		☐ landscape	
		☐ recreation/culture	
		☐ religion	
		☐ social	
		☐ transportation	
		☐ work in progress	
		☐ unknown	
		☐ vacant/not in use	
		☐ other:	
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
			0

7. Description

Inventory No. BA-3059

Condition

☐ 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 Bengies African American Survey District is located on the Middle River Neck in the Fifteenth District of Baltimore County. Denoted on the Middle River USGS map, Bengies is a small hamlet to the northeast of the village of Middle River. The community appears to be on Bengies Road to the east of the intersection with Wampler Road. This area is north of the railroad line, Eastern Boulevard, and Martin State Airport. An oral history by Louis Diggs, author of numerous books documenting African American neighborhood histories in Baltimore County, helped determine the location of the Bengies African American community. According to Margaret Marie Beasley, Eastern Avenue was an African American street in Bengies along with several side streets that extended off the avenue. This survey documents the historic residential area on Eastern Avenue between Martin State Airport and Sharp Street Church. The eastern border of the Bengies African American Survey District begins with Sharp Street Church on Eastern Boulevard.

A total of nine historic buildings are associated with the Bengies African American Survey District. A large number of buildings stand on Eastern Avenue and Carroll Island Road that date from the last half of the 20th century and are not associated with the district. Very few residential buildings stand along Eastern Avenue in Bengies. Eastern Avenue has been consumed by commercial enterprises. Side roads to Eastern Avenue in Bengies such as Earls Road and Carroll Island Road, have been developed for commercial or industrial businesses.

Baltimore County built a two-room school on Eastern Avenue, constructed circa 1920, for the children of Bengies and the surrounding African American communities. The long rectangular building rests on a rock-faced concrete-block foundation and is capped with a side-gable roof sheathed with asphalt shingles. A front-gable vestibule contains the double-leaf entry. Features include five 1/1 wood-sash windows flanking the vestibule and an exterior-end brick chimney. A shed-roof addition is located on the side elevation.

Two similar residential dwellings are located adjacent to one another at 11501 and 11509 Eastern Avenue. Both houses are sited adjacent to the road on a level grassy lot with a small front yard surrounded by several trees, shrubs and a few foundation plantings. The wood-frame houses are two-and-a-half-stories high measuring three bays across both with a center cross-gable pierced with a window opening. Dating to 1907, 11509 Eastern Avenue features an L-shape footprint and is capped with a cross-gable roof. Features include 6/6 wood-sash windows, asbestos-shingle cladding, cornice returns, and a gable-roof portico. The neighboring dwelling, 11501 Eastern Avenue, built circa 1919, has a shed-roof enclosed porch, cornice returns, an interior corbeled brick chimney, and replacement 1/1 windows. The façade is clad with German-vinyl siding and the remaining elevations are covered with asbestos shingles. A historic shed-roof addition is located on the rear elevation.

The house at 111 Earls Road is a wood-frame house standing two-stories high and two bays wide dates to circa 1940. It is capped with a side-gable roof and is clad with vinyl siding and features include a single-leaf entry, a tripartite window on the façade, overhanging eaves, and a non-historic shed-roof porch across the façade.

The wood-frame residence at 11621 Eastern Avenue, built circa 1940, stands two stories high, three bays wide, and rests on a random-rubble-stone foundation. Rising above the side-gable roof is one exterior-side concrete-block chimney. Features include 2/2 wood-sash windows, a shed-roof porch supported with metal posts, and asbestos shingle cladding.

8. Significance

Inventory No. BA-3059

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

Specific dates 1900-1950s

Architect/Builder Unknown

Construction dates 1900-1950s

Evaluation for:

☐ 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 reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

The Bengies African American Survey District is located on the Middle River Neck in the Fifteenth District of Baltimore County. Just prior to 1915, the Fifteenth District was developed out of the Twelfth District. The Twelfth District was divided into three districts, the Twelfth, Fourteenth, and the Fifteenth. According to Scharf in 1881, the Twelfth District, was the largest in square-mileage and second in total population among all the districts in Baltimore County.(1) The Fifteenth District is known for the availability of commercial and recreational fishing and hunting along the Patapasco River, Middle River, Back River, and Gunpowder River.

Immediately adjacent to the community is the African American settlement called Chase. These two settlements are quite similar due to their close proximity and blending of boundary lines. According to a life-long resident of Bengies, the African American settlement is centered on Eastern Avenue located south of the railroad with a few dwellings sited on side streets. The African American area is difficult to discern for several reasons. It adjoins Chase and shares the same churches as Chase. In addition, much of the community is located north of the railroad as it is labeled on current road maps of Baltimore County. The 1969 USGS map of Middle River denotes Bengies as a small hamlet centered around Wampler Road and Bengies Road which is north of the railroad and northeast of the town of Middle River.(2) According to an oral history, this area is not African American.

The Bengies survey district dates to circa 1897 to the 1950s. The Bengies area is not distinguished as Bengies on the 1877 Hopkins Atlas. Along Eastern Avenue are several residences such as William H. Russell, Benjamin McComas, Jason Shultz, and William Hopkins. A school house and a church are depicted at the crossroads of Carroll Island Road and Bowley Quarters Road just south of Eastern Avenue. A 'colored schoolhouse' is denoted on the map along Eastern Avenue where the road intersects with the railroad tracks east of Earls Road (at the current location of Sharp Street Church).(3)

The 1915 Bromley Atlas depicts J. Johns, William H. Russell, G. Chow, C. Pitts, and A. Earl as property owners south of the Baltimore and Washington Railroad. The map shows the 'colored' school house east of Earls Road as well as a church, the Sharp Street U.M. Church. The school house and church denoted on the 1877 map at the crossroads of Carrolls Island Road and Bowley Quarters Road are extant on the 1915 map.(4)

The 1920 census listed towns surveyed in each of the districts along with the roads. For the area of Bengies, the roads listed were Swamp Poodle Road, Eastern Avenue Extended, Bird River Road, Earls Road, Carrolls Island Road, and Bull Neck Road. Bird River Road did not list any African American residents in the census.(5)

During the early to mid-20th century, the area of Bengies was entirely a rural agricultural landscape. Many of the farms were either pig farms or crop farms mostly growing vegetables. Similar to Chase, employment for men in Bengies was primarily for the railroad and the women worked for private families.

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Name Bengies African American Survey District

Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

African American children attended the Chase School first located in the Moses Lodge building adjacent to the Sharp Street Church. School was held in the one-room basement of the lodge and the Moses Society met on the first floor. Baltimore County rented the building during the mid-20th century to be used as a school for seven grades. According to Margaret Beasley, following graduation from the 7th grade many of the male students found jobs instead of continuing their education.(6) This building is no longer extant.

The local African American church in Bengies is the Sharp Street United Methodist Church. This church is actually considered to be in Chase but will be discussed briefly here. Sharp Street United Methodist Church (BA-512) was established in 1865 when former slaves founded the church. Several of the founders include the Scotts, John Johns, and Johanna Johns. The first church was a log cabin that was used until 1902. A second church was later constructed and then an extension was finished in 1978. It is called Sharp Street U.M. Church because members of the Sharp Street U.M. Church on Etting Street in Baltimore City assisted in the organization of the church.(7)

Listed on the 1920 census are 29 African American households encompassing Eastern Avenue, Swamp Poodle Road, Bull Neck Road, and Carrolls Island Road.(8) African American families include:

Queen
Lee
Howard
Quarries
Staten
Madden
Green
Cooper
Wright
Marshall
Johns
Purnell
Allender
Walker
Reed
Grinage
Muse
Lungford
Preston
Young
Brooke
Scott
Beasley
Grey

According to Margaret Beasley, other African American families that moved to Bengies after 1920 include Armstrong, Jones, and Veney.(9)

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In 1920, the African American community predominantly originated from Maryland. Of the 29 families, four heads of households were born in Virginia and one originally came from North Carolina. A total of seven heads of households and two female spouses are listed as not being able to read or write. This is a high percentage in the community compared to other African American neighborhoods in 1920. In the neighboring community of Chase, each of the African American heads of households listed were able to read and write.(10)

Employment for African American men in the 1920s was limited to working as laborers for the railroad, farms, sewer, rolling mill, sawing timber, and several worked as caretakers. The two female heads of households worked as washerwomen for private families. Households in Bengies in the first quarter of the 20th century ranged from one to eighteen people. A total of three households had more than ten members and nine households contained anywhere between five and nine members. Fifteen listings had four or less people in their household.(11)

The area that was considered the African American settlement of Bengies is no longer entirely African American. All of Bengies is a mixture of white and black people both integrated on the streets and within the community.(12)

ENDNOTES

1. Thomas J. Scharf, History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men, (Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881), p. 926.
2. Middle River, MD USGS Map, U.S. Geological Survey: Reston, VA, 1969.
3. Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877).
4. Map of Baltimore County (Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915).
5. United States Census, 1920. National Archives, Washington, DC.
6. Louis Diggs, Interview with Margaret Marie Beasley on May 22, 2003.
7. Baltimore County Historic Inventory, Office of Planning, Towson.
8. United States Census, 1920. National Archives, Washington, DC.
9. Louis Diggs, Interview with Margaret Marie Beasley on May 22, 2003.
10. United States Census, 1920. National Archives, Washington, DC.
11. United States Census, 1920. National Archives, Washington, DC.
12. Louis Diggs, Interview with Margaret Marie Beasley on May 22, 2003

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 25 acres

Acreage of historical setting Unknown

Quadrangle name Middle River, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Bengies African American Survey District is located in the Fifteenth District of Baltimore County. The properties within the survey district have historically been associated with tax map 83 since their construction.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kristie Baynard, Architectural Historian

organization EHT Traceries, Inc.

date 6/20/03

street and number 1121 Fifth Street, NW

telephone 202-393-1199

city or town Washington

state DC zip code 20001

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
410-514-7600

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Continuation Sheet

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Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877.

Baltimore County Historic Inventory. Office of Planning, Towson.

Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. A History of Baltimore County. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.

Diggs, Louis. Transcribed interview of Margaret Marie Beasley in Bengies, Baltimore County, MD, 22 May 2003.

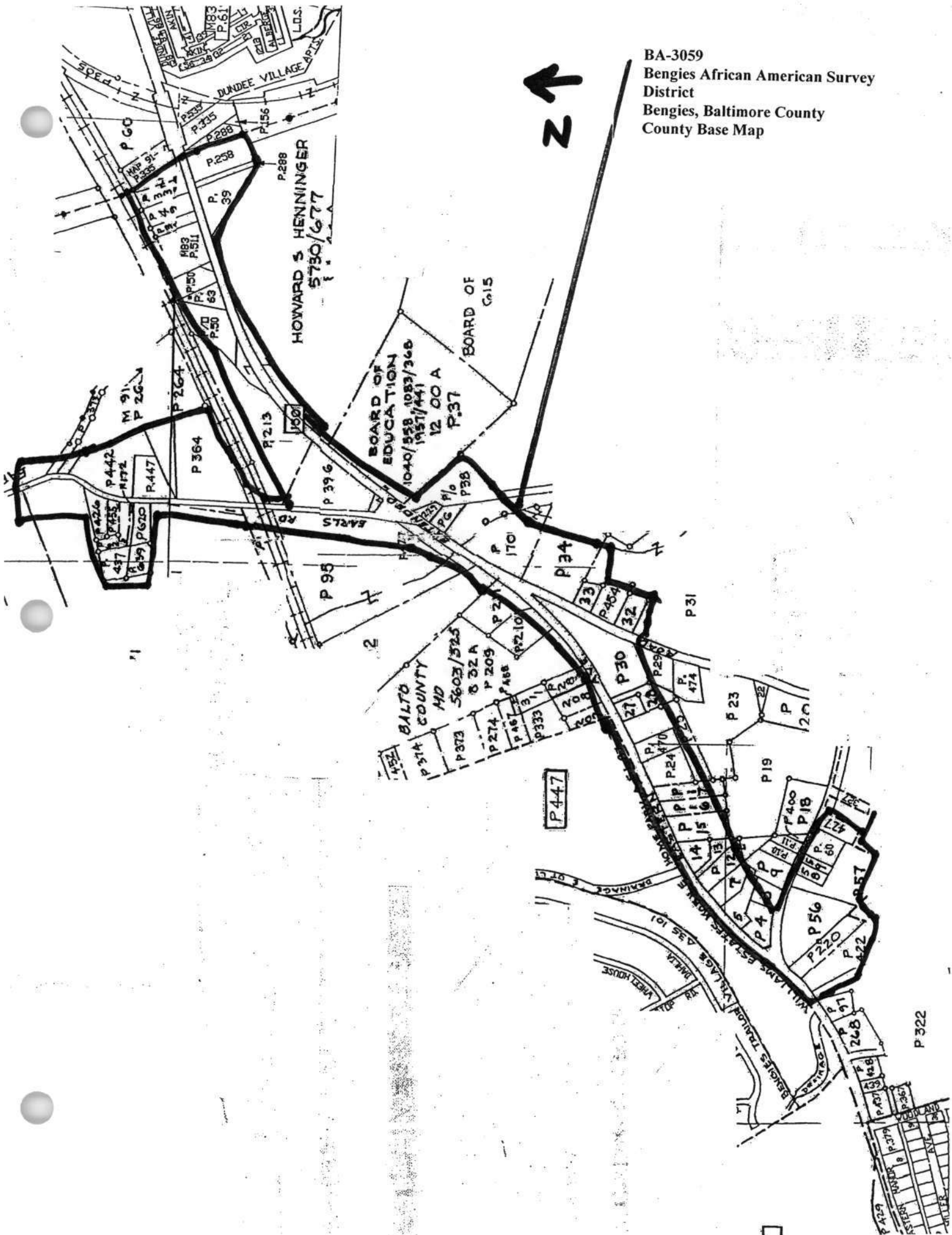
Map of Baltimore County. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.

Sidney, J. C. Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. The Census of 1920, Baltimore County, Maryland. National Archives.

↑
2



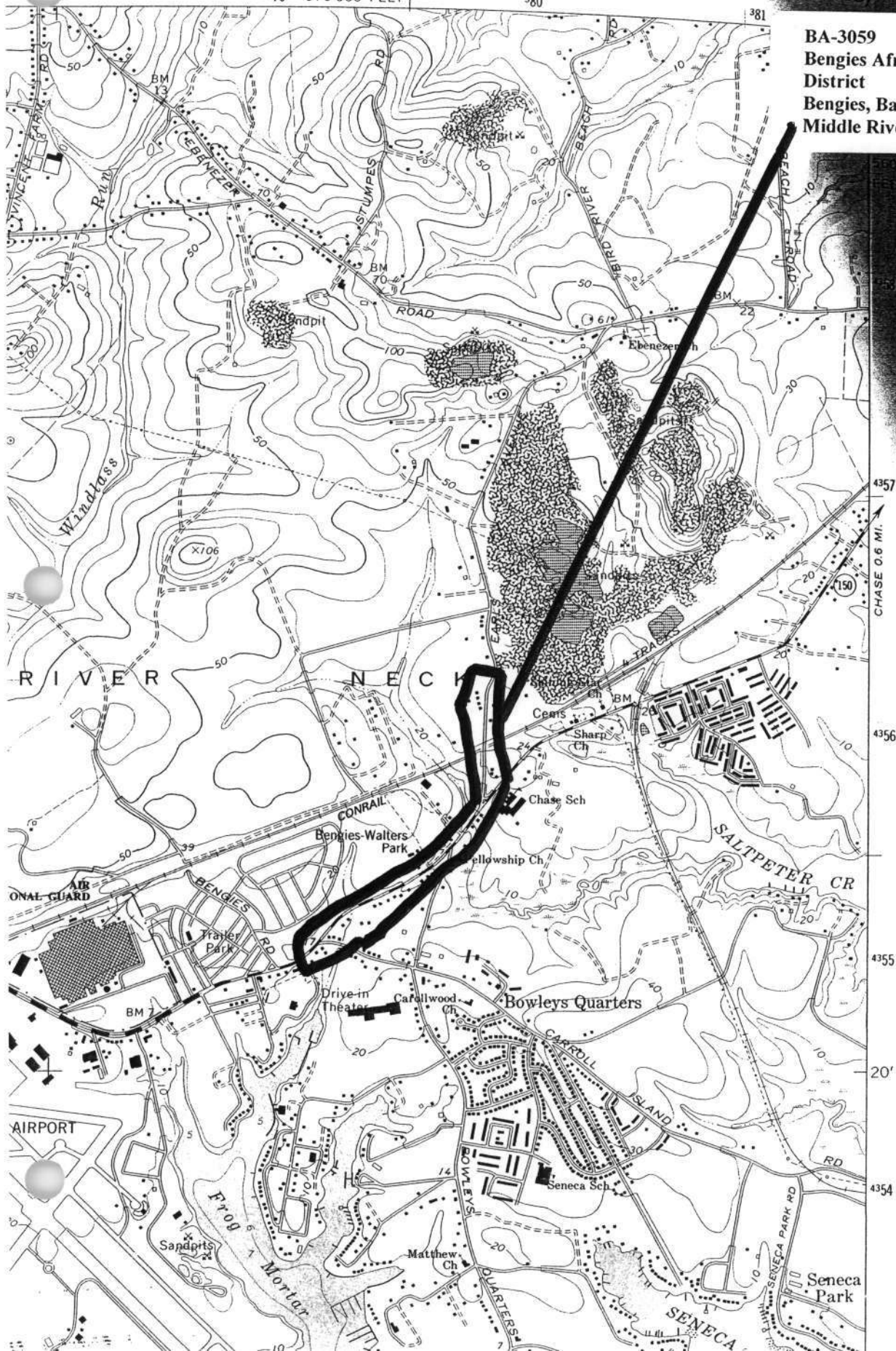
MIDDLE RIVER QUADRANGLE
MARYLAND-BALTIMORE CO
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

379 970 000 FEET

380

381

BA-3059
Bengies African American Survey
District
Bengies, Baltimore County
Middle River, MD USGS Map





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Bengies African-American survey District
Baltimore County, MD

Tracerics

612083

MD SHPB

Chase Elementary School

1 of 5



BA-3059

Bengus African American survey District
Baltimore County, MD

Tracerics

612003

MD SHPD

11509 Eastern Avenue, view looking East

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BA-3059

Bengies African-American Survey District

Baltimore County, MD

TraceGIS

6/2003

MD SHPO

11501 Eastern Avenue, view looking south-west

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BA-3059

Benghis African-American survey District
Baltimore County, MD

Traceries

6/2003

MD SHPO

111 Earls Road, view looking East
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BA-3059

Bengies African American Survey District
Baltimore County, MD

Traceries

612003

MD SHPD

11621 Eastern Ave, view looking south
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