BA-3119

Back River Neck 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-3119
Back River Neck African American Survey District
Baltimore County, MD
1915-1950s

In the early 20th century, Back River Neck, the land between Baltimore and the Middle River, was still largely agrarian. According to the 1877 G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Baltimore County there is only one building sited directly on the road, the school house west of Sue Creek of the Middle River. None of the names shown on the 1877 Atlas are familiar African American family names such as the ones listed in the 1920 census. In 1878, the congregation of St. Stephens's African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church (BA-3126), was sold land on Back River Neck Road. A log church was erected at this time and later replaced several times by newer edifices. By 1915, the area along Back River Neck Road between Normans Creek and Sues Creek became much more populated. A few of the new names listed since the 1877 atlas include Kirby, Bond, Grant, Miles, Dennis, Boston, Mercer, and Brown. In the town of Essex is the Walters "Colored" School.

The Back River Neck African American settlement is spread along Back River Neck Road, Browns Road, and Annetta Road. Few historic dwellings remain in the area most of them having been demolished or replaced by recent construction. Approximately 18 historic properties are located in the Back River Neck survey district. This linear survey district dates to circa 1915 to 1950s. The survey district is a rural district that is situated on a peninsula flanked by Middle River and Back River. The residences along Back River Road are sited near the road with only a few situated away from the road. Historic residences on Back River Neck Road range from one-story wood frame minimal tradition houses to wood-frame I-houses.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-3119

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	Back River Neck African American Survey District
other	

2. Location

street and number	Back River Neck Road, Browns Road, Annetta Road	___	not for publication
city, town	Essex	X	vicinity
county	Baltimore County		

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

name	Multiple Ownership		
street and number		telephone	N/A
city, town	state	zip code	

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Baltimore County Courthouse	tax map and parcel:	tax map 97
city, town	Towson	liber	folio

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
X district
___ building(s)
___ structure
___ site
___ object

Ownership
___ public
X private
___ both

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

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
18	23	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
18	23	Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
0

7. Description

Inventory No. BA-3119

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.

The Back River Neck African American settlement is spread along Back River Neck Road, Browns Road, and Annetta Road. Few historic dwellings remain in the area most of them having been demolished or replaced by recent construction. Approximately 18 historic properties are located in the Back River Neck survey district. This linear survey district dates to circa 1915 to 1950s. It extends the length of Back River Neck Road and includes Browns Road, Annetta Road, and West Road. The survey district is a rural district that is situated on a peninsula flanked by Middle River and Back River. The residences along Back River Road are sited near the road with only a few situated away from the road. The properties have driveways and are surrounded by trees and bushes. The houses along the side roads of Brown Road, Annetta Road, and West Road are sited near the road and a portion of Brown Road and Annetta Road is on the waterfront.

One rock-faced concrete block dwelling is located at the terminus of Browns Road. Dating from 1920, this residence one story high and four bays wide featuring a single-leaf entry on the façade. The 6/1 wood-sash windows have thin wood sills. The hipped roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles and features slightly overhanging eaves. The door and windows are detailed with a paneled concrete-block surround.

Near the intersection of Browns Road and Annetta Road is a historic dwelling located on Annetta Road on the waterfront. It is one story high, three bays wide and is constructed of wood frame. The structural system is clad with wood shingles and the side-gable roof is covered with asphalt roll. A 3/1 wood-sash window pierces the façade as well as a single-leaf door and a 1/1 wood-sash window. This small house is set back from the road with a dirt and gravel driveway and is surrounded by mature trees.

Historic residences on Back River Neck Road range from one-story wood frame minimal tradition houses to wood-frame I-houses. The I-house at 831 Back River Neck Road is two-and-a-half stories, three bays wide, and is constructed of wood frame. Resting on a parged foundation, this house is clad with German vinyl siding and features a shed-roof porch on the façade supported with brick posts.

The 1930s bungalow at 626 Back River Neck Road is capped with a hipped roof and rests on a rock-faced concrete-block foundation. This dwelling rises one-and-a-half stories featuring a hipped-roof dormer and measures three bays across.

The two-story brick rowhouse at 521 Back River Neck Road is a particularly unique building type to be located in rural agricultural environment. Dating to the early 1920s, this building is constructed of five-course American brick bond. Measuring three bays wide, this building features a central entry with a single-leaf door illuminated with a one-light transom. A half-hipped roof porch covers the first story of the façade and is supported with brick posts. The shed roof has a heavy wood molded cornice with knee brackets and a paneled frieze. The 1/1 wood-sash windows have segmental arch lintels and rowlock brick sills.

The house at 343 Back River Neck Road is a wood-frame structure standing two-and-a-half stories high and two bays wide. It is capped with a side-gable roof above which rises an interior-center brick chimney and a gable dormer on the façade. The façade is pierced with 1/1 wood-sash windows and a single-leaf entry. The foundation of the house is not visible due to the replacement aluminum siding. A shed-roof porch covers the two bays on the façade.

8. Significance

Inventory No. BA-3119

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

Specific dates 1915-1950s **Architect/Builder** unknown

Construction dates 1915-1950s

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

The land to the east of Baltimore remained predominantly rural through the mid-19th century, and historic atlases indicate that the town of Essex consisted of farmland occupied by B.E. Cook in 1877. The majority of the land was owned, however, by members of the Taylor family. Eastern and Mace Avenues were unimproved through the late 19th century across the Back River Neck between the Back and Middle Rivers.(1) In the early 20th century, the land between Baltimore and the Middle River was still largely agrarian. At this time, a streetcar line extended to the northeast from Baltimore along Eastern Avenue.(2) The community known as Essex was born in 1908 out of the development of land near the intersection of Eastern and Mace Avenues by the Taylor Land Company. The first dwelling constructed in the newly developed town was constructed shortly thereafter. Although schools, public services and religious institutions were established in Essex in the 1910s, the community's growth did not increase rapidly. The 1915 county atlas indicates that few structures existed on the city blocks created by the Taylor Land Company's survey of the area.(3) The town's development accelerated after the 1919 establishment of the Eastern Rolling Mill near the Essex community. The mill quickly became one of the primary employers in the area around the Back River. Worker housing quickly sprang up on the undeveloped lots that were part of the Paradise Resurveyed plat.(4)

According to the 1877 G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Baltimore County there is only one building sited directly on the road, the school house west of Sue Creek of the Middle River. None of the names shown on the 1877 Atlas are familiar African American family names such as the ones listed in the 1920 census.(5) In 1878, the congregation of St. Stephens's African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church was sold land on Back River Neck Road. A log church was erected at this time and later replaced several times by newer edifices. By 1915, the area along Back River Neck Road between Normans Creek and Sues Creek became much more populated. A few of the new names listed since the 1877 atlas include Kirby, Bond, Grant, Miles, Dennis, Boston, Mercer, and Brown.(6) In the town of Essex is the Walters "Colored" School.

A sampling of the 1920 United States Census lists twenty-five African American families on Back River Neck Road. The names include Bond, White, Kirby, Boston, Grant, Brown, Price, Adams, and Redford. The average number in a household is five with families having anywhere from two to eleven members. Of the twenty-five families only two wives worked outside of the house, both as family servants. The predominant occupation was farm laborer. Other male occupations included truck-farm laborer, well digger, ship-yard laborer, log-team driver, cutting-wood laborer, express driver, foundry laborer, mill laborer, and railroad watchman. All of the African American heads of households and spouses were able to read and write. Fourteen families rented their property and eleven owned their houses. Of the eleven that owned their houses, six properties were listed on the census as free and five had mortgages. A majority of the African American families originated from Maryland. Five heads of households were born in Virginia, two were born in Arkansas, one in Texas, one in New Jersey, and one in Alabama.(7)

According to John Brown in an interview for the Times, African American students attended St. Stephen's A.M.E. Church until the county provided schools. Once there were public schools for African American students the residents sent their children to the

Walters School. For religious services, the African American communities of Back River Neck, Hopewell Avenue, and Goodwood was serviced by the St. Stephen's A.M.E. Church. A horse drawn shuttle service was set up by local residents to transport members that lived in Goodwood and along Back River Neck Road.(8)

ENDNOTES

1. George J. Martinak, "A Short History of Essex and Middle River" TMs (Photocopy), Department of English, Essex Community College, Essex, Maryland (May 1963), pp. 3-11; see also Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877).
2. Martinak, p. 13.
3. Martinak, pp. 11-17; see also Map of Baltimore County (Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915).
4. Neal A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, A History of Baltimore County (Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979), p. 326.
5. Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. (Philadelphia: G.M.Hopkins, 1877).
6. Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley, 1915).
7. U.S. Bureau of the Census, The Census of 1920, Baltimore County, Maryland. (National Archives).
8. Mike Preston, "John Brown: A Back River Neck Institution At 73," The Times, 21 July 1982, p. 3.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 87 acres

Acreage of historical setting Unknown

Quadrangle name Middle River, MD Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Back River Neck African American Survey District is located in the area of Essex in the Fifteenth District of Baltimore County. The properties have been associated with tax map 97 since their costruction.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Kristie Baynard, Architectural Historian		
organization	EHT Traceries, Inc.	date	6/10/03
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

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-3119

Name Back River Neck African American Survey District
Continuation Sheet
Number 9 Page 1

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

Baltimore County Historic Inventory.

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

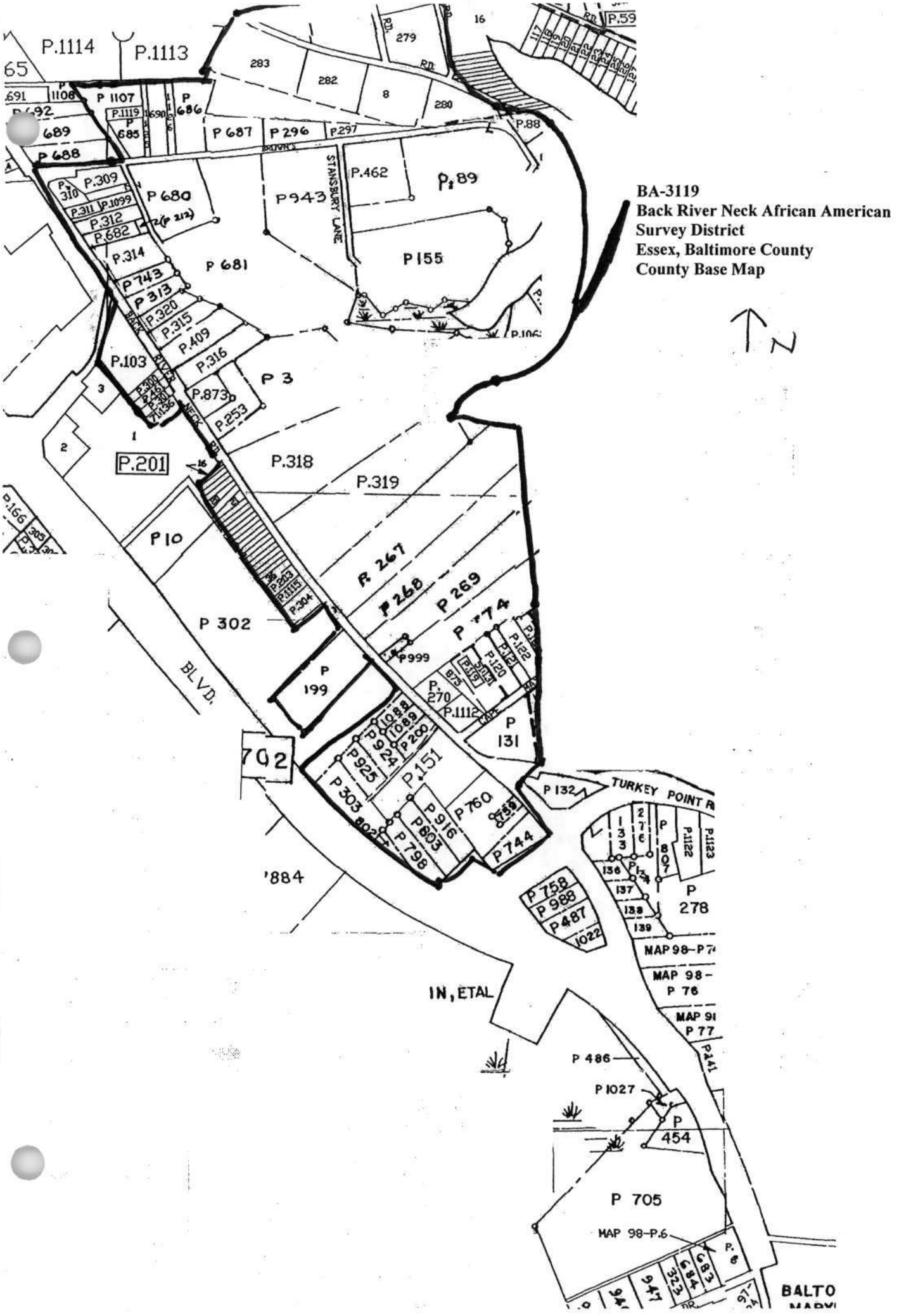
Map of Baltimore County. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.

Preston, Mike. "John Brown: A Back River Neck Institution at 73." The Times. Baltimore: 21 July 1982.

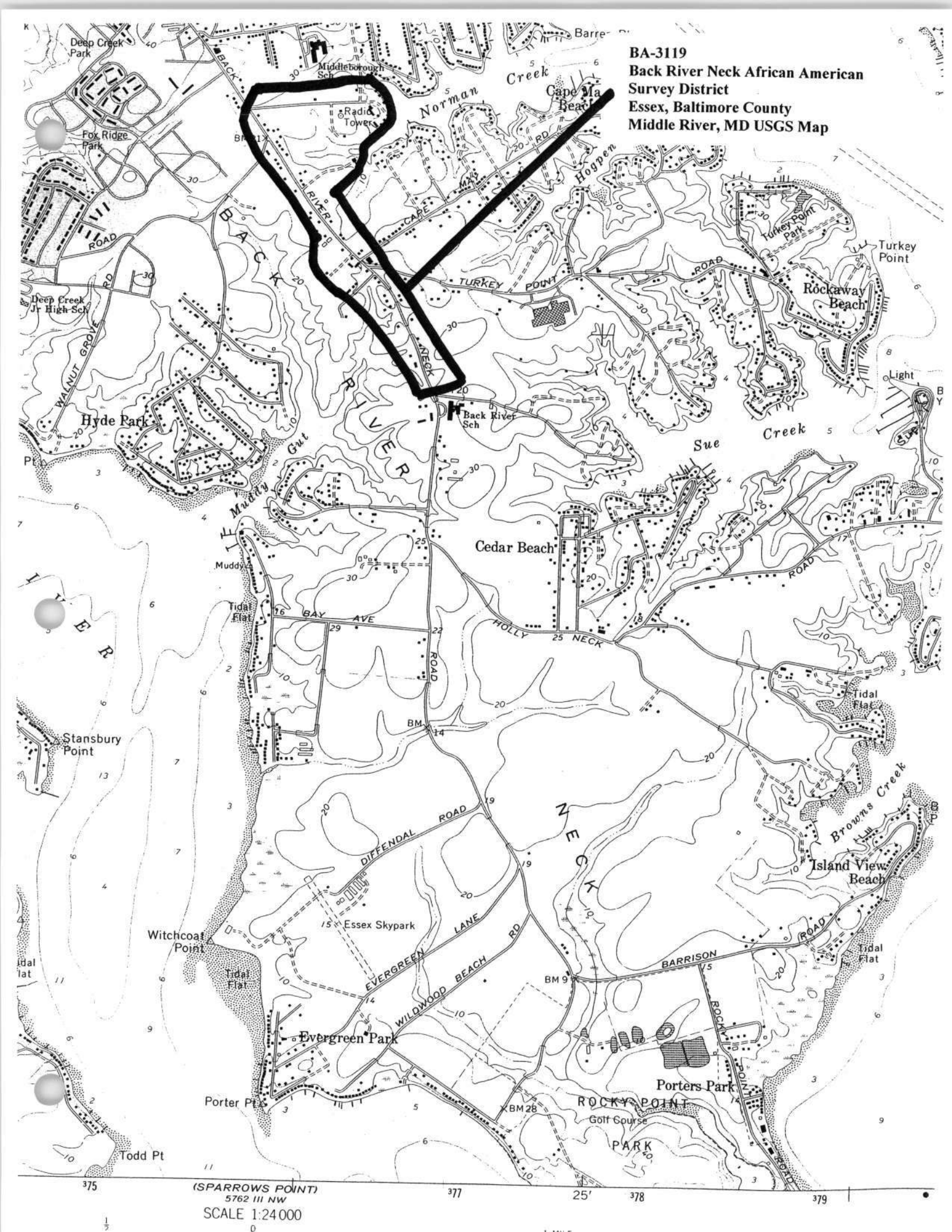
Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.

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 1930, Baltimore County, Maryland. National Archives.



BA-3119
Back River Neck African American Survey District
Essex, Baltimore County
County Base Map


BA-3119
Back River Neck African American
Survey District
Essex, Baltimore County
Middle River, MD USGS Map
Deep Creek Park
Middleborough Sch
Radio Towers
Fox Ridge Park
Norman Creek
Cape Ma Beach
Hogpen
Turkey Point Park
Turkey Point
Rockaway Beach
Deep Creek Jr High Sch
Back River Sch
Hyde Park
Muddy Gut
Sue Creek
Light
Cedar Beach
Tidal Flat
Stansbury Point
Witchcoat Point
Essex Skypark
Browns Creek
Island View Beach
Evergreen Park
Porters Park
ROCKY POINT
Golf Course
PARK
Porter Pt
Todd Pt
(SPARROWS POINT)
5762 III NW
SCALE 1:24 000



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Back River Neck African-American Survey District
Baltimore County, MD
Traceries
6/2003
MD SHPO
Browns Road, view looking south-east

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BA-3119
Back River Neck African-American Survey District
Baltimore County, MD
Traceries
6/2003
MD SHPO
Browns Road, view looking north
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Back River Neck African-American survey District
Baltimore County, MD
Tracerics
6/2003
MD SHPO
Annetta Road
3 of 7



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Back River Neck African-American survey District
Baltimore County, MD
Traceries
6/2003
MD SHPO
6116 Back River Neck Rd, view looking north-east

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Back River Neck African-American survey District
Baltimore County, MD
Traceries
6/2003
MD SHPO
529-533 Back River Neck, view looking north
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BA-3119
Back River neck African-American survey District
Baltimore County, MD
Traccrics
6/2003
MD SHPO
521 Back River neck Rd, view looking north
6 of 7



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Back River neck African-American survey District
Baltimore county, MD
Traceries
6/2003
MD SHPO
Back River neck Road
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