CH-797

Wigwam

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: 10-11-2011

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

NR Eligible: yes X
no ___

Property Name: Wigwam Inventory Number: CH-797

Address: 2805 Crain Highway Historic district: ___ yes X no

City: Waldorf Zip Code: 20604-0738 County: Charles

USGS Quadrangle(s): Piscataway

Property Owner: Wigwam LLC Tax Account ID Number: 061451

Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 58 Tax Map Number: 8

Project: US 301 Waldorf Area Transportation Improvements Agency: Maryland State Highway Administration

Agency Prepared By: Parsons Brinckerhoff

Preparer's Name: Renee S. Novak Date Prepared: 4/8/2008

Documentation is presented in: 2003 Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) form completed by the Charles County Planning Department

Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ___ Eligibility recommended X Eligibility not recommended

Criteria: ___A ___B ___C ___D Considerations: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:

Name of the District/Property:

Inventory Number: Eligible: ___ yes Listed: ___ yes

Site visit by MHT Staff ___ yes X no Name: Date:

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

Description:

The Wigwam, also known as Wall's Bakery, is located at 2805 Crain Highway along the historic U.S. 301 corridor near Waldorf, Maryland. The structure is situated on an approximately 2.5-acre lot that is oriented southeast-northwest and faces directly onto U.S. 301. The property is bordered by commercial businesses to the northeast and southwest, a moderately forested area to the northwest, and U.S. 301 to the southeast. The building is set on a level, open lot with patches of shrubs and landscaping on the northwest elevation and east side near U.S. 301. For the purposes of this assessment, the Wigwam is being evaluated as an individual resource. The period of significance for the structure is 1950 to 1968.

The Wigwam was constructed in 1950 and is of concrete block construction. The main body of the building has a low-pitched, sloping shed roof with wings flanking both sides of the façade. The most notable feature on the building is the round-shaped conical structure that extends beyond the roofline and visually dominates the front façade. This feature is known as the "teepee" and is clad in vinyl siding. A portion of the front façade is also sheathed in vertical wood siding with a Formstone kneewall on either side of the teepee. A two-story, front gable structure is situated at the center of the footprint. Several shed additions are also

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended X **Eligibility not recommended** ___

Criteria: X A ___B X C ___D **Considerations:** ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

MHT Comments: Despite somewhat compromised integrity, Wigwam is a rare representative example of mid-20th century "Googie" architecture (Googie)

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services — Date: 11/14/08

Reviewer, National Register Program — Date: 11/14/08

200802868

present on the building. Three entranceways are located on the front elevation. A grassy area is located directly in front of the teepee where an original circa 1950s carved totem pole once stood. The property appears vacant and the northeast yard is closed off with a chainlink fence.

The Wigwam exhibits other architectural features such as wide, overhanging roof eaves with exposed rafters that extend over the concrete patio below, brick dentils over concrete block on the façade, and an original 1950s neon sign that is detached from the main structure and is located on the front of the property near U.S. 301. This sign is comprised of three parts depicting a Native American theme with a man shooting a bow and arrow, a decorative teepee, and a burning fire. The sign is no longer in operation.

History:

The land on which the Wigwam currently sits was once two parcels comprising a series of different lots. Parcel #1 refers to the northeast portion of the property where the building is located. It was originally owned by Francis W. Hill and consisted of Lots 21 and 26. In the early 1940s, the lots were sold to members of the Vernon family who in turn sold the parcel to the Alpha Corporation in the 1950s. It is believed that the Alpha Corporation built the current structure to function as a nightclub and casino during the slot machine-era in Charles County, Maryland. After Joseph and Shirley Goldstein's ownership between 1957 and 1958, the property came under the ownership of Waldorf Inc. of Delaware. Thirteen years later, the Wigwam Motors company acquired the building.

The Walls family bought the property in 1974 to house their gift shop and popular "Wall's Bakery" that was known for its world-famous éclairs. The Walls expanded their property in 1988 by acquiring a second parcel, a lot to the southwest of the building. Parcel #2 was sold by Metrah Swindell and Virginia Swindell, who purchased the property in 1967. Prior to 1967, the property was under the ownership of Robert and Mary Shelton who had bought the land from the Juster family in 1954. George and Crystal Walls, heirs to the Walls enterprise, continued to operate the bakery on these premises until 2005.

Commercial development greatly increased along the U.S. 301 corridor in the years following World War II. The boom in the Charles County roadside lodging and entertainment business came when the U.S. 301 Potomac River Bridge was constructed in 1940. As a result of the expansion of U.S. 301, new pathways opened between Baltimore and Virginia. In the mid 1950s, traffic on U.S. 301 became so heavy that the road was dualized. "Motels and restaurants sprang up to accommodate tourists, sportsmen and others who passed through or stopped in Charles County." Motels and other tourist/entertainment facilities came after the county successfully marketed the Charles County strip along U.S. 301 as offering the best business potential on the highway between Maine and Florida.

From 1949 to 1968, the casino and gaming industry flourished along the U.S. 301 corridor. Slot machines were a huge tourist attraction for motels and other businesses along this route. In 1949, slot machines were legalized and could be found in almost any bar or restaurant along the strip of U.S. 301 referred to as "Little Vegas". This strip refers to a swath of highway along U.S. 301 located south of the intersection between U.S. 301 and MD Route 5. Back in its heyday, this area once buzzed with nightlife, 24-hour diners, movie theaters, bright lights, live music shows, and famous performers. In fact, Maryland had three times as many federally licensed gambling devices as Nevada. Finally, in March 1963, after years of struggle and turmoil surrounding the presence of slot machines in Charles and Prince George's Counties, the state legislature voted to freeze new slots licenses and ultimately phase out all slot machines by July 1, 1968. This action had a permanent negative impact on the motel and entertainment industry along the corridor.

Perhaps the most popular form of Wigwam-inspired architecture during the early to mid-twentieth century came from Frank

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended _____ **Eligibility not recommended** _____

Criteria: ___A ___B ___C ___D **Considerations:** ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

MHT Comments:

_____ _____

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

_____ _____

Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

Redford's "Wigwam Village" in Horse Cave, Kentucky. Constructed in 1933, Redford was an early motel entrepreneur who capitalized on the burgeoning roadside motel industry. Hoping to lure more customers, he created a unique business product that utilized an Indian architectural motif combined with "teepee" motel construction. Redford's originality in motel design expanded to several other states throughout the South and Southwest, with a total of seven operating motels completed by 1950. However, after failing to establish a corporate chain years later, the Wigwam Villages eventually ceased to operate as motels.

Significance Evaluation:

The Wigwam is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. While U.S. 301 was an entertainment corridor with supporting restaurants and lodging, substantial changes to the property and a change in use from casino to bakery in the mid 1970s have diminished the characteristics of novelty roadside architecture that were an interesting pattern along the roadway. The property no longer conveys a sense of the entertainment corridor that comprised portions of U.S. 301. Integrity of setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling resulting from alterations to the property have altered the character-defining features of the property that were associated with the mid-century tourist boom in the area. Therefore, it is not eligible under Criterion A.

Historic research, including deed research, indicates that the property has no known association with significant or important persons who have made specific contributions within a regional or national context. Therefore, it is not eligible under Criterion B.

The Wigwam is also not eligible under Criterion C, although the building's remaining unique features yield limited insight into popular roadside-themed architecture of the early to mid-twentieth century. Although it originally was an intriguing piece of roadside architecture in Maryland, the main building and landscape have been altered since its initial construction in 1950. Shed additions exist on the southwest elevation, and the original 1950s wooden totem pole has been removed from the premises. While the original Wigwam displayed unique and playful architectural elements, subsequent changes to the property resulting in diminished integrity of setting, materials, association, feeling, and workmanship have compromised the property's original design intent. Therefore, it is not eligible under Criterion C for architectural significance.

The Wigwam was not evaluated for eligibility under Criterion D as part of this evaluation.

WORKS CONSULTED

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Jakle, John A., Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers. The Motel in America. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1996.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended _____ **Eligibility not recommended** _____

Criteria: ___A ___B ___C ___D **Considerations:** ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

MHT Comments:

_____ _____

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

_____ _____

Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

Janis, Stephen. Little Vegas. Chesapeake Life. May/June 2007. Available online at <http://www.chesapeakelifemag.com/index.php/cl/features_article/fe_little_vegasmj07/> accessed March 2008.

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MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended _____ **Eligibility not recommended** _____

Criteria: ___A ___B ___C ___D **Considerations:** ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

MHT Comments:

_____ _____

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

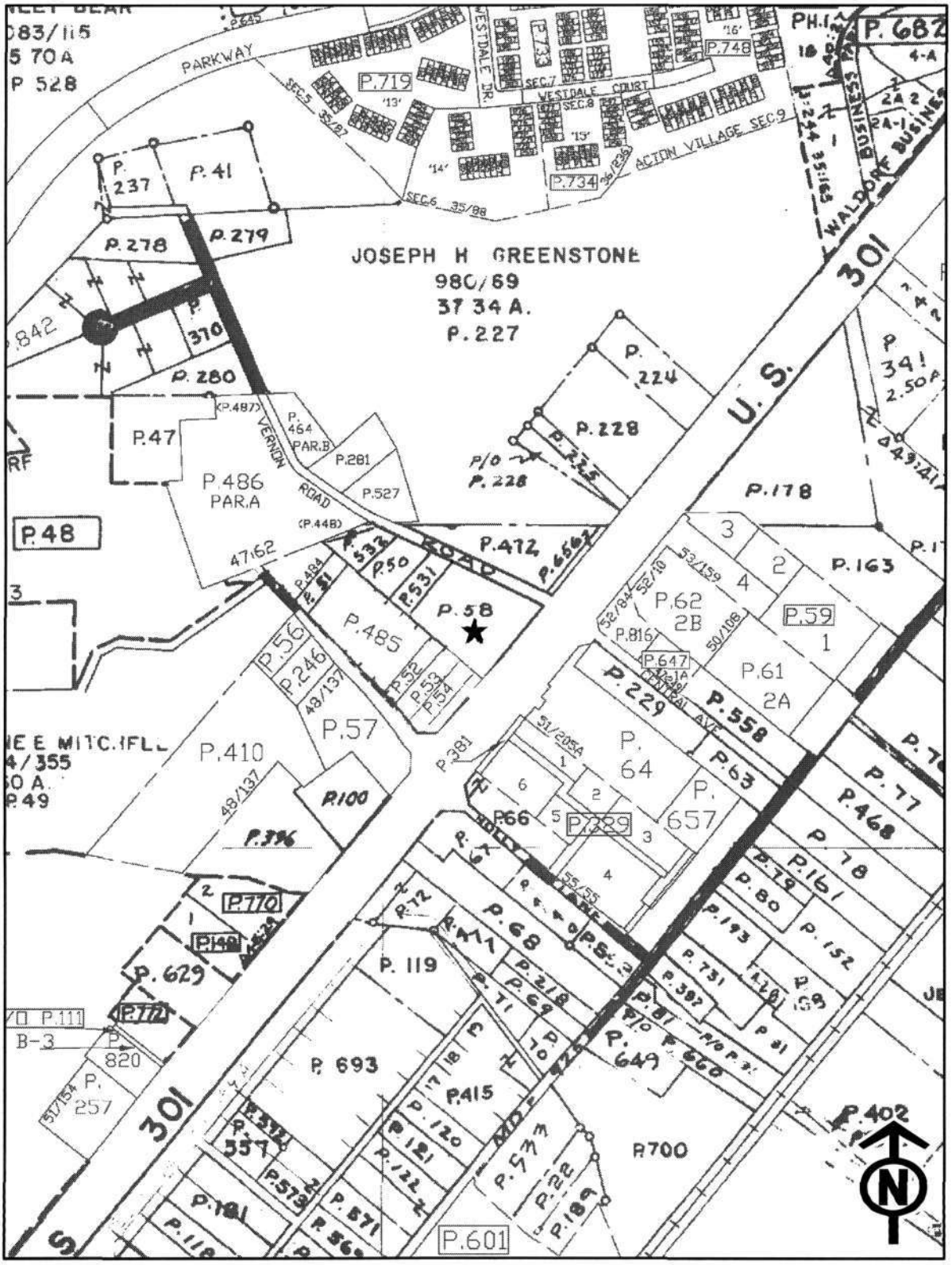
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Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

Wigwam (CH-797)
2805 Crain Highway
Waldorf, MD 20604-0738

Wigwam

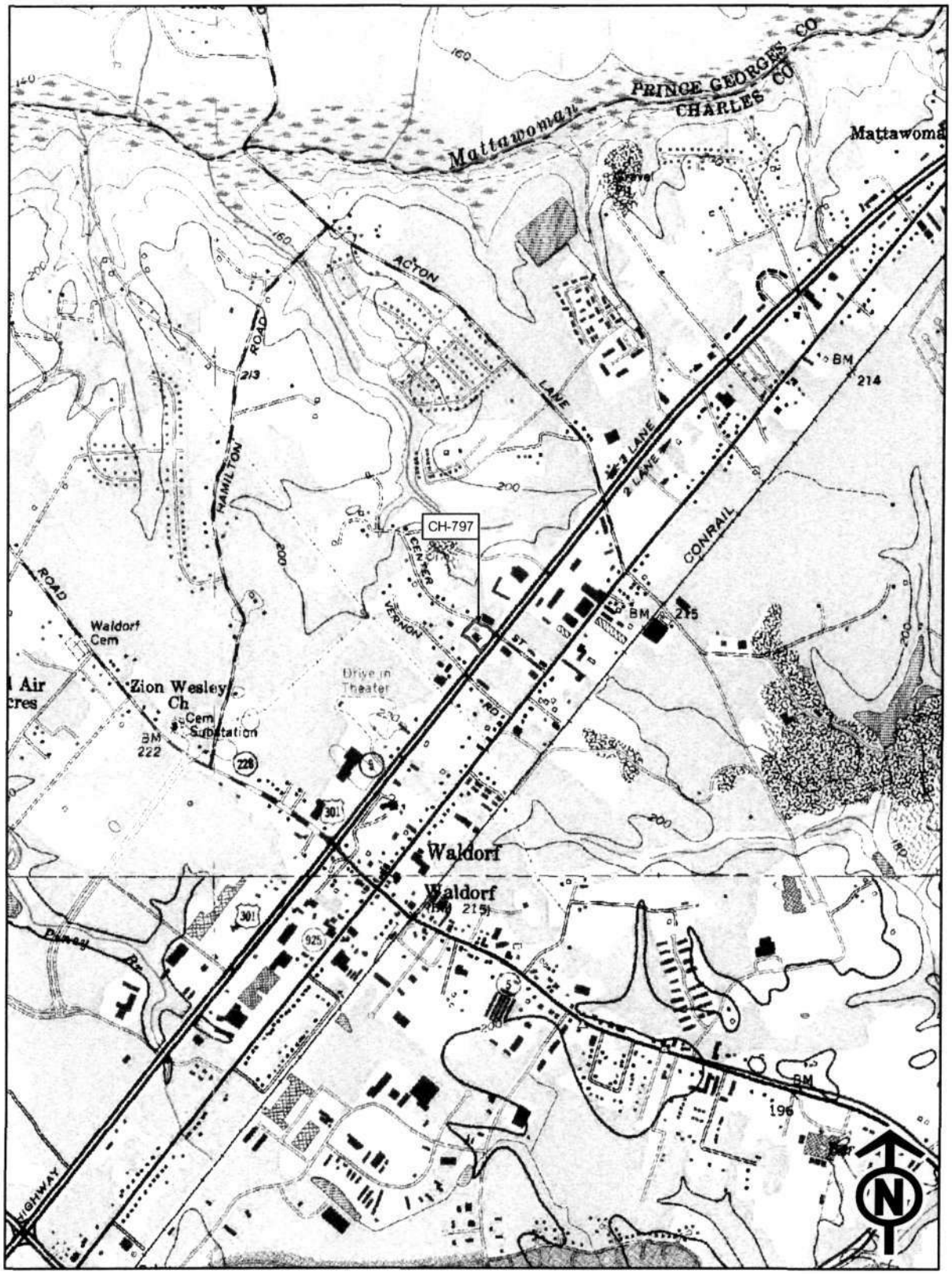
Charles County Tax Map



Wigwam (CH-797)
2805 Crain Highway
Waldorf, MD 20604-0738

Wigwam

USGS Piscataway Quad



0 1,000 Feet

1:24,000



CH-797
Wigwam
Charles County, Maryland
Renée S. Novak
March 19, 2008
MD SHPO
view of the east elevation, looking northwest
#1 of 4


BAKERY

CH-797
Wigwam
Charles County, Maryland
Renée S. Novak
March 19, 2008
MD SHPO
view of the east elevation and the original
1950s neon sign
2 of 4



CH-797

Wigwam

Charles County, Maryland

Renée S. Novak

March 19, 2008

MD SHPO

View of the south elevation and parking lot

#3 of 4



CH-797

Wigwam

Charles County, Maryland

Renée S. Novak

March 19, 2008

MD SHPO

view of the east elevation and parking lot from across U.S. 301

#4 of 4

CH-797 **c. 1950**
Wigwam
Waldorf
Private

Built in 1950, the Wigwam including the structure, a decorative wooden totem pole, and a neon sign that accompanies the site, is the most intact former casino in Charles County and the best surviving representation of the slot-machine era. Built to evoke American Indian culture of the Midwest, the building represents the whimsical roadside architecture of the 1950's and 60's. In 1949, Charles County legalized gambling, and casinos began to appear along Crain Highway where they were readily accessible from Baltimore and Washington, DC. Along with the casinos came restaurants, cocktail lounges, and motels. Gambling became such an important business in Charles County that at one point a full quarter of the county's revenue derived from slot machines. After slot machines were banned in Charles County in 1967, the area's popularity as a travel destination deteriorated.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-797

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	Wigwam
other	

2. Location

street and number	2805 Crain Highway	___ not for publication
city, town	Waldorf	___ vicinity
county	Charles	

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

name	Wigwam				
street and number	2805 Crain Highway			telephone	301-843-0187
city, town	Waldorf	state	MD	zip code	20604-0738

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Charles County Courthouse	tax map and parcel:	8/58
city, town	La Plata	liber 364	folio 256

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

Ownership
___ public
X private
___ both

Current Function
___ agriculture
X commerce/trade
___ defense
___ 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	
1	____	buildings
____	____	sites
____	____	structures
____	____	objects
1	____	Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
0

7. Description

Inventory No. CH-797

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.

Erected circa 1950, the Wigwam is Charles County's best-preserved casino built during the slot machine era in southern Maryland. Today, serving as a popular bakery and gift shop, the building stands on roughly 2 1/2 acres on the northeast side of Crain Highway in Waldorf. The building's most notable feature is the teepee- which consists of a round shaped conical shape with a center structural support. While the teepee is the dominant visual element, the main block of the building includes sloping shed wings projecting from either end. The roof has a very shallow pitch with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. The building is of concrete block construction and the façade is sheathed in vertical board siding with a formstone knee wall. The building includes several shed additions including a large two-story front gable structure used as a residence. Enhancing the American Indian theme, the site includes an original circa 1950 wooden carved "totem pole" that stands near the entrance and the block on the façade is painted to mimic American Indian design.

An original 1950 neon sign stands in front of the building next to Crain Highway. The sign has a three part composition and depicts an American Indian theme with an Indian in western dress poised to shoot an arrow northward in a straight horizontal line. In the center is a teepee and on the northern edge is a representation of a burning fire.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-797

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

Specific dates circa 1950 **Architect/Builder** unknown

Construction dates circa 1950

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.)

Built in 1950, the Wigwam including the structure, a decorative wooden totem pole, and a neon sign that accompanies the site, is the most intact former casino in Charles County and the best representation of the slot-machine era. Built to evoke American Indian culture of the Midwest, the building represents the whimsical roadside architecture of the 1950's and 60's. During the 1940s and 1950s, an important entertainment industry grew up along Crain Highway. One of the most influential of the entertainment industries that developed in the county was gambling. Illegal gambling had existed in Charles County and the rest of southern Maryland for centuries. However, the first slot machines were brought to the area in the 1930s in preparation for the tercentenary celebration of the landing of the Ark and the Dove. The first of these "one-armed bandits" were installed in stores and hotels mostly in St. Mary's County. Charles County soon followed their lead by placing slot machines at Chapel Point and Cobb Island. In 1949, Charles County legalized gambling, and casinos began to appear along Crain Highway where they were readily accessible from Baltimore and Washington, DC. Along with the casinos came restaurants, cocktail lounges, and motels. Gambling became such an important business in Charles County that at one point a full quarter of the county's revenue derived from slot machines. After slot machines were banned in Charles County in 1967, the area's popularity as a travel destination deteriorated. The construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge offered Washingtonians ready access to Maryland's ocean side resorts, draining the tourism trade out of southern Maryland. The largest casinos included the Wigwam, the Stardust and the Waldorf Hotel. Stardust was recently demolished, and the Waldorf Hotel has been significantly altered from its original form.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CH-797

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	2.64		
Acreage of historical setting	2.64		
Quadrangle name	Piscataway	Quadrangle scale	1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 8, Parcel 58.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Cathy Hardy/Historic Sites Surveyor		
organization	Charles County Planning	dat	2/19/2003
street and number	200 Baltimore Street	telephone	301-396-5815
city or town	La Plata	stat MD	zip code 20646

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

Major Bibliographic References:

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History.* Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

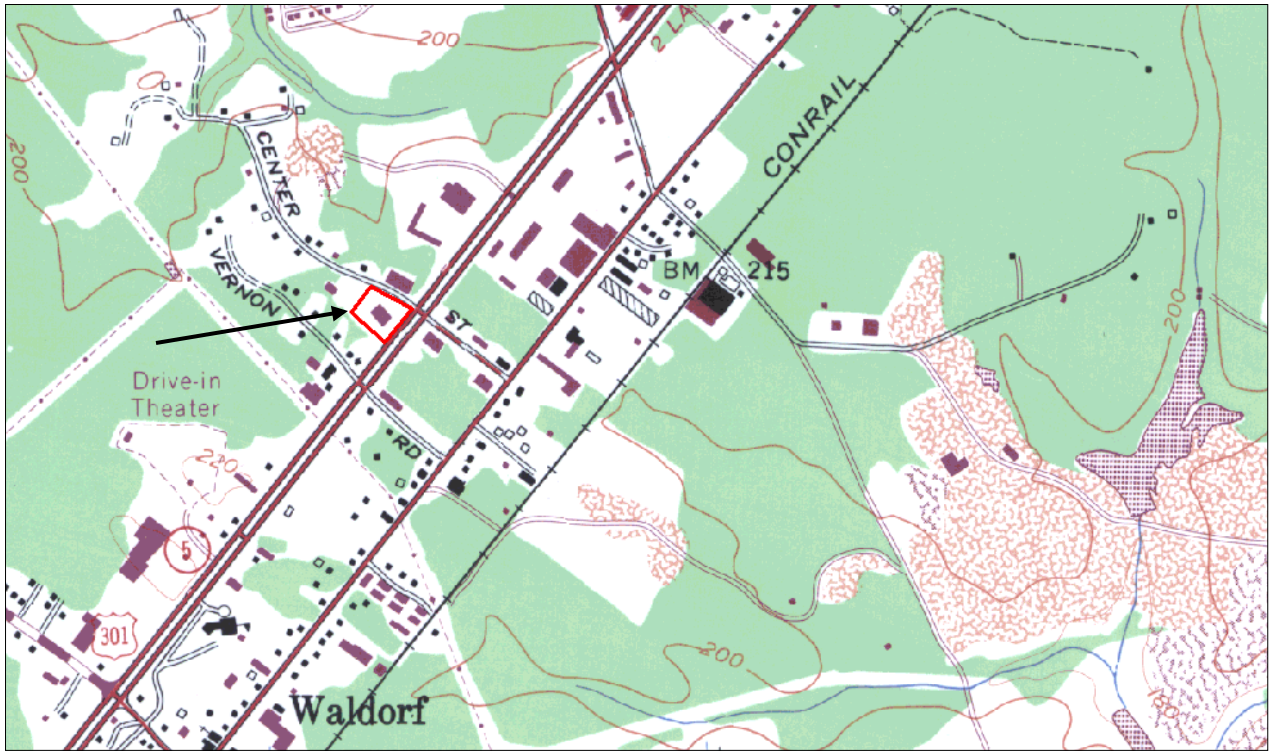
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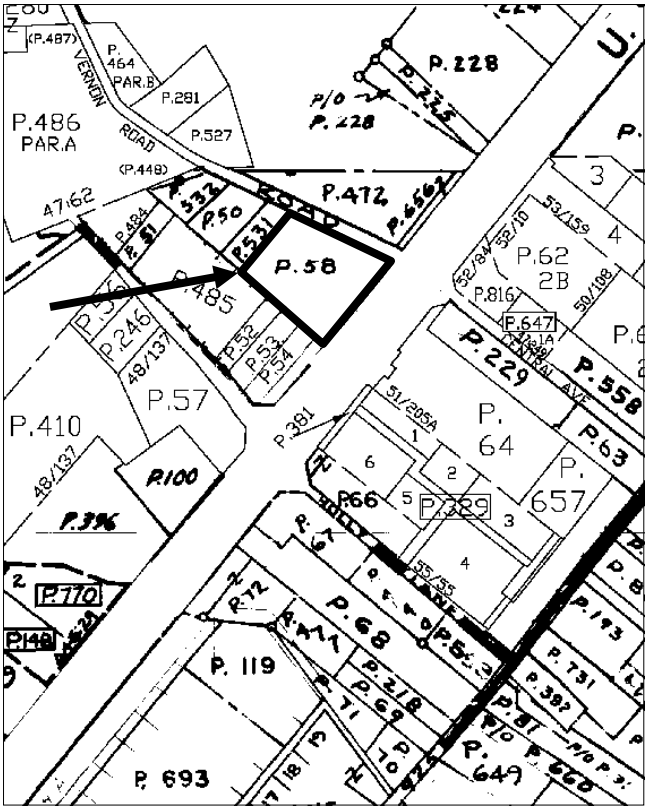
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CH-797
Wigwam
Piscataway 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle 1957, Photorevised 1985 (Vernon Road mislabeled on quad)



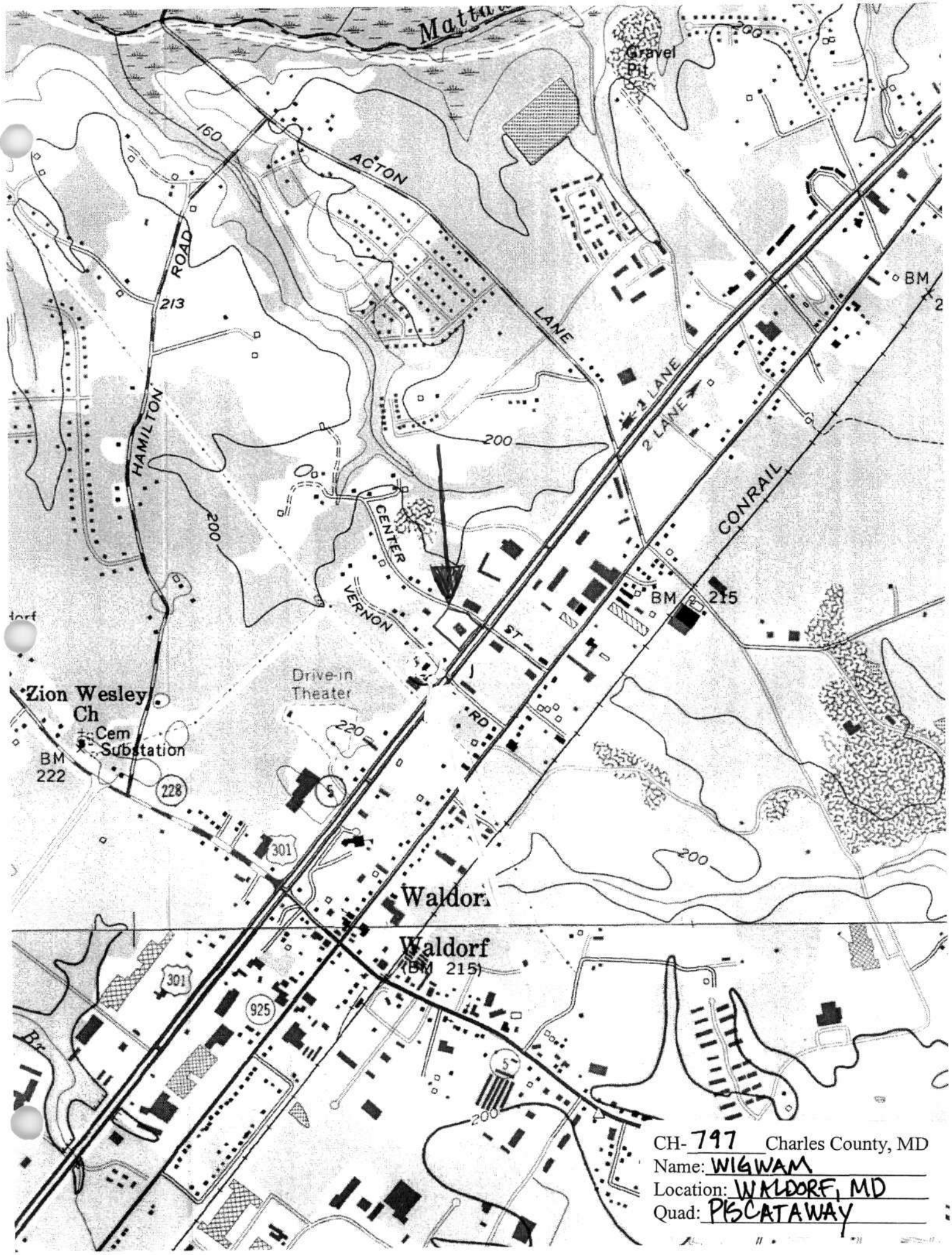
Charles County Tax Map 8

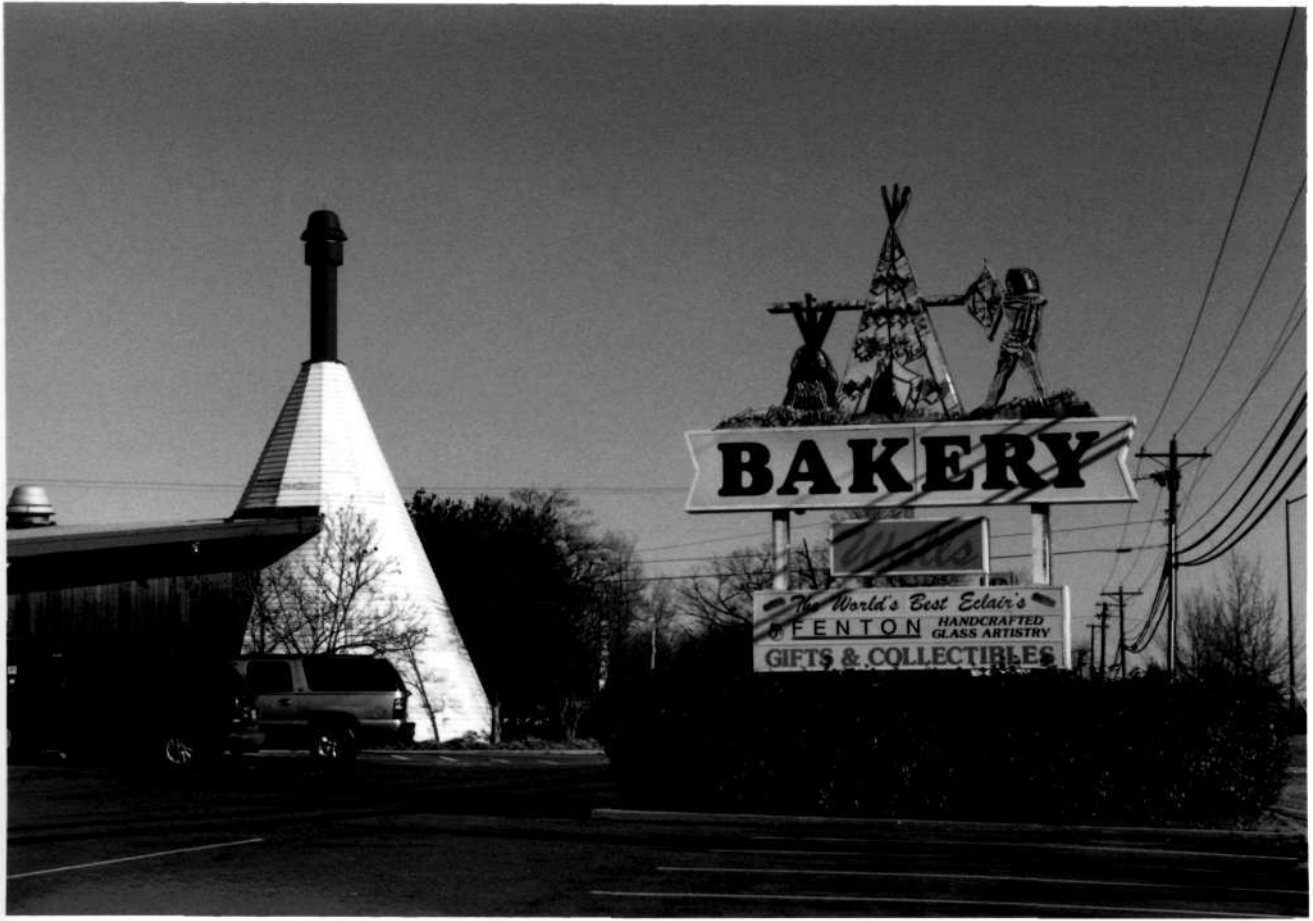


National Web Map Service, 6" OPM, 2008



MHT GIS 09/08/2011 JKC


Gravel Pit
ACTON
ROAD
160
213
HAMILTON
LANE
1 LANE
2 LANE
CONRAIL
BM
200
CENTER
VERNON
ST
RD
BM 215
Drive-in Theater
220
Zion Wesley Ch
Cem
Substation
BM 222
228
301
925
Waldorf
(BM 215)
CH- 797 Charles County, MD
Name: WIGWAM
Location: WALDORF, MD
Quad: PISCATAWAY


BAKERY
The World's Best Eclair's
FENTON
HANDCRAFTED GLASS ARTISTRY
GIFTS & COLLECTIBLES

CH-797
WIGWAM
Waldorf, MD
1/2004
C. Hardy
MD SHPO
LOOKING N
1 OF 3


BAKERY
PENN DUTCH
GIFTS & COLLECTIBLES

CH-797
WIGWAM
Waldorf, MD
1/2004
C. Hardy
MD SHPO
LOOKING N
2 OF 3



CH-797
WIGWAM
WALDORF, MD
1/2004
C. HARDY
MD SHPO
LOOKING EAST
3 OF 3