

435 E. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE (HOUSE)
435 E. Pennsylvania Avenue
Towson
Baltimore County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-1075

HABS
MD
3-TOW,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HABS
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

435 E. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE (House)

HABS No. MD-1075

LOCATION: 435 E. Pennsylvania Avenue, Towson, Baltimore County, Maryland

SIGNIFICANCE: 435 E. Pennsylvania Avenue, a frame shotgun house probably constructed in the latter half of the 19th century and extended to the south after 1929, exemplifies a building type often present in African American settlements like the East Towson Historic District. (Shotgun houses are gable-front linear plan structures without halls that are typically three rooms deep.) The shotgun is commonly found in the southern United States and is not typically associated with Maryland architecture.

DESCRIPTION: The front-gabled shotgun faces south onto E. Pennsylvania Avenue, a residential street that deadends at the Black and Decker headquarters approximately 100 yards east of the house. Like other residences in the East Towson Historic District, the shotgun is situated at the street frontage of a deep, narrow lot. Two-story residences flank this smaller one-story building. (See HABS No. MD-1074.) The two-bay rectangular-shaped house has a central chimney and is topped by a gabled tar paper roof. The two-room deep shingle-clad building measures 30 ft. x 11 ft. and features a front porch with concrete steps. A marble threshold at the street marks the end of the front walk. A bathroom ell is attached to the west side of the rear of the building. Wooden script letters attached to the rear facade spell "Good Guys." Only one "G" of the initials "GG" remains on the front facade.

Sanborn Maps and physical evidence show that the present building is larger than the original structure. The original house was expanded to the south some time after 1929. Physical evidence shows the front wall of the original building was located at the center of the present front room. The foundation for the original building is sandstone blocks; the foundation of the newer portion to the south is concrete block. On the interior the walls of the original building are plaster on lath; the newer portion is sheetrock. The Sanborn Maps show that the building did not have a front porch prior to the enlargement, which took place between 1929 and 1955. The appearance of visible framing and newer brickwork at the top of the chimney suggests that the present roof was constructed after the addition to the building and may have a steeper pitch than the original one. The rear ell of the building is also an addition since its south wall is the exterior north wall of the shotgun.

HISTORY: The East Towson Historic District, which comprises the neighborhood surrounding 435 E. Pennsylvania Avenue, was developed between 1850-1930 by African Americans. Many early residents were descended from enslaved African Americans at Hampton, the nearby plantation of Capt. Charles Ridgely. Ridgely made provisions for his slaves' freedom upon his death in 1830.

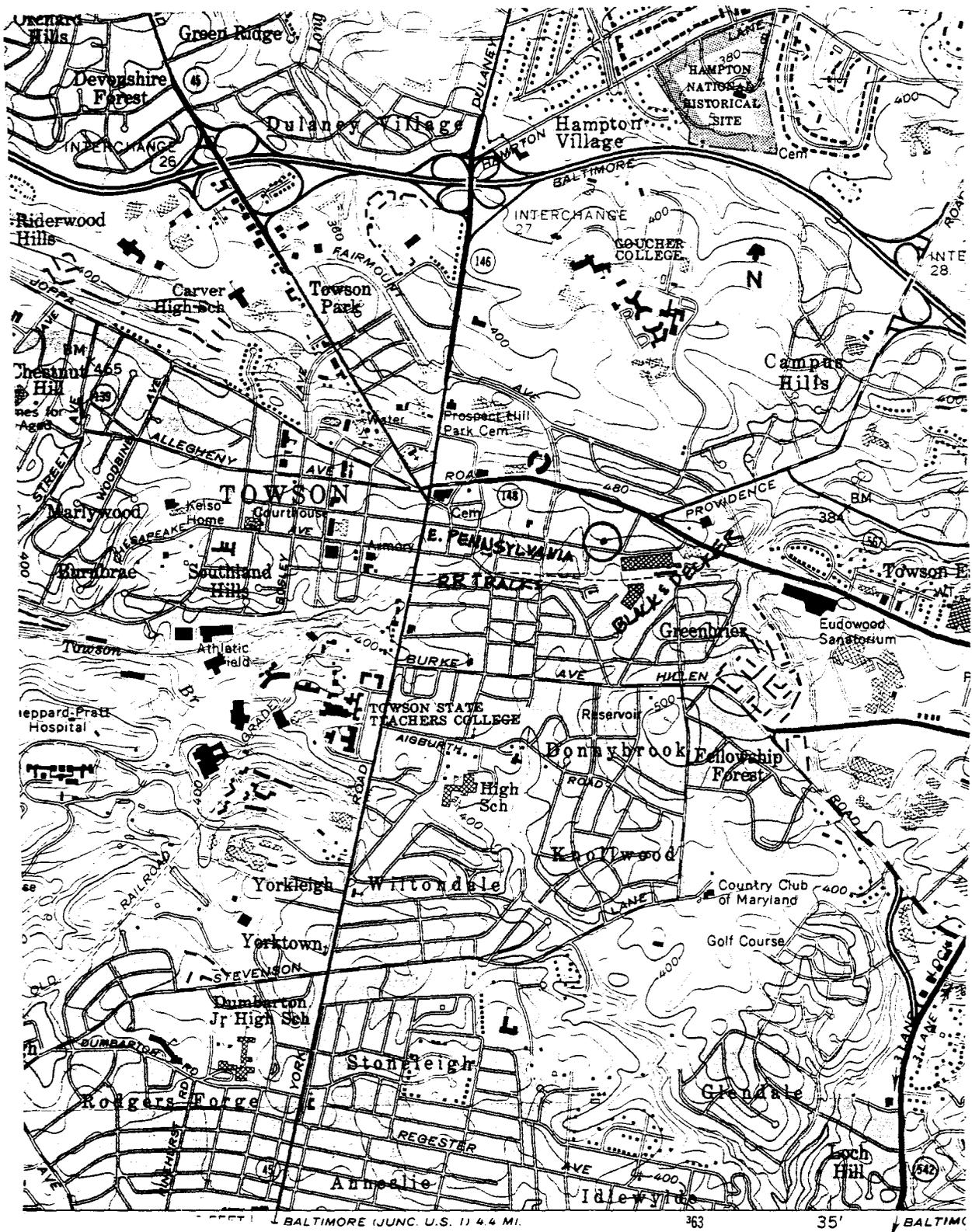
The appearance of the foundations and lath and plaster interior walls of the older, north portion of 435 E. Pennsylvania Avenue suggest that the building was constructed during the latter half of the 19th century. The sandstone piers forming the foundation of the older portion of the building resemble the foundations of 437 E. Pennsylvania Ave., an I-house adjacent to 435 E. Pennsylvania Ave. The shotgun is shown on the 1922 Sanborn Map, the earliest map depicting this site. (Sanborn coverage for this neighborhood appears particularly diligent because of its proximity to the Black and Decker plant, which appears as a "special" in each series.)

The Polk's Baltimore Suburban Directory for 1955, the first directory for Towson, lists Mrs. Ruth Tyler, a maid, as the occupant. The Polk's Directories do not indicate that she owned the house. (Polk's Baltimore Suburban Directories, 1955, 1957, and 1959).

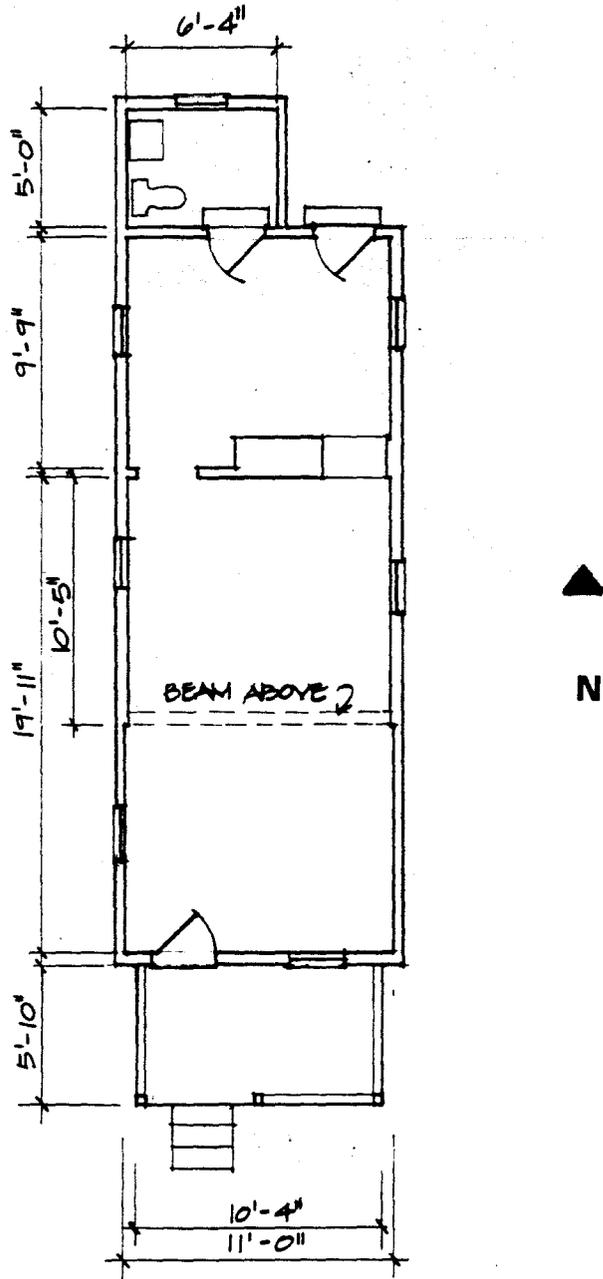
The most recent occupant of the building was the Good Guys club, which moved in approximately 1986 after the building had been vacant. (Telephone conversation with Mrs. Shelly Hawkins.) A sign on the south wall of the front (south) room sets forth the house rules.

SOURCES: National Register Nomination for the East Towson Historic District (Maryland Historical Trust)
Polk's Baltimore Suburban Directories, 1955, 1956, and 1957 (Library of Congress)
Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1922, 1929, and 1955 (Library of Congress)
Telephone conversation with Shelly Hawkins, Towson, Maryland, July 6, 1993.

HISTORIAN: Betty Bird
Washington, D.C.
Consultant to Struever Bros., Echols and Rouse, Inc.
September 21, 1993



SOURCE: Adapted from USGS Towson Quadrangle



Drawn by Ellen Pratt Harris
June 1993
All dimensions are to interior wall surface