

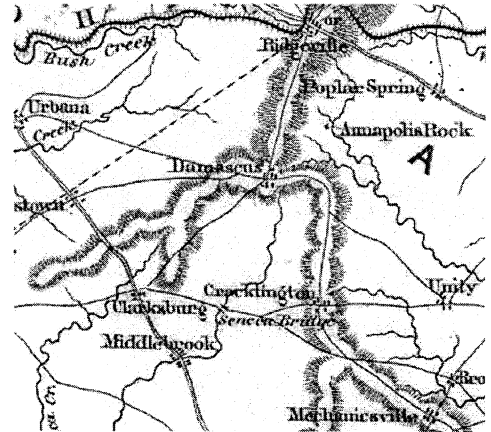
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

GOAL: Protect the important historic and archeological resources in the area.

INTRODUCTION

The crossroads community of Damascus is located at the intersection of two major early ridgeline roads: Ridge Road (MD 27) and Damascus Road (MD 108). Ridge Road was the Susquehanna native trail from the river at Harrisburg to Seneca Creek leading to the Potomac River. Early roads were established along the ridgelines and farms were oriented near waterways, most notably along Seneca Creek.

The Ridge Road-Damascus Road corridor was one of several principal market roads established in 1774. This was part of a regional route established by the General Assembly for a market road from Frederick to Annapolis.¹ It sits atop a formation called “Parr’s Ridge” that stretches from Mt. Airy and Ridgeville to Damascus, Laytonsville and Sandy Spring.²



Tobacco Farming

Tobacco was the main cash crop of the 18th century. Maryland produced one-fourth of all tobacco in the country, and Montgomery County planters contributed about one-fifth of its total. Prices for land and goods were quoted in pounds of tobacco. By 1879, Damascus had one of 10 agricultural granges in the County. By that time, most farmers in other parts of the County had begun diversifying their farms and were raising other crops.

Damascus was still, in 1879, in “the heart of an extensive tobacco region.” Some farmers, including the Hiltons and Browns, still farmed tobacco into the 20th century.³ Tobacco houses were once the most common outbuilding in the county. Today there are a handful of tobacco houses remaining, at most. In the Damascus area, farmers continued growing tobacco into the early 20th century. Brown’s Log Tobacco House was photographed near Damascus in 1973. The Warfield Tobacco House was still standing in 1983. It was located on Clearwater Drive, near Damascus.

Early Log Houses

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, most dwellings were simple one or two room structures often built of log. Still standing is the Warfield Log House, Damascus Road (MD 108), near Etchison. The one-room structure has a box staircase leading to a loft bedroom.



¹ Janie Payne, *Montgomery County Story IX:4*, p6. E. Guy Jewell, “History of Damascus”, *Courier*, 1977, B14.

² Martha C. Nesbitt and Mary Reading Miller, *Chronicles of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and Environs*, 1987.

³ Dawson Lawrence, “History of Montgomery County, Maryland” in Hopkins Atlas, 1879.

Mills

The Goshen Mills complex established by 1792, included a massive three-story brick merchant mill and a frame gristmill. The complex was built on the Goshen Branch of Great Seneca Creek. Another mill stood on a nearby tributary by 1798. Harry Dorsey operated the mill and built a house nearby

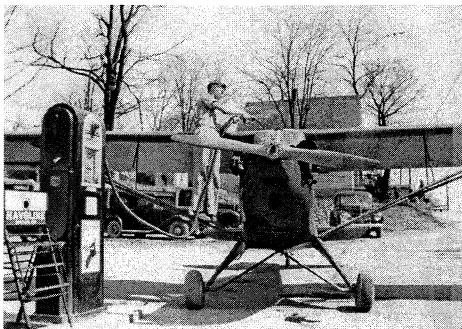
Communities

The earliest communities in northern Montgomery County, including Hyattstown, Clarksburg and Damascus were established to serve the needs of travelers. Before the community known as Damascus was subdivided, there was a settlement. By 1814, James Whiffing had a dwelling, store, blacksmith shop and stables. In 1816, Edward Hughes bought 40 acres from Whiffing and platted Damascus in 14 lots. Street improvements were one of the main reasons for the 1890 incorporation of Damascus.

Later communities served farmers and families who lived in the immediate vicinity. Typically, these small villages had a general store, church, and school. The buildings were simple, vernacular architecture. Through the mid-1800s, the most common building type for community structures was a one-story, gable front form. This type was found on the original Wesley Grove church, and it still is found in the original section of the Woodfield store, and the Woodfield Odd Fellow Hall (now an education building for the Wesley Grove church).

Dairy Farming, 1920s-1930s

Road improvements were a major benefit to farmers. In the late-19th century, farms with direct access to the railroad had a market for shipping farm goods. With improved roads, a larger group of farms had access to markets. Paved roads and motor trucks brought dairying to the Damascus area in the mid-1920s. By the mid 1930s, it was a major source of income for local farmers. After 1910, County roads began to be improved with new road surfaces. Route 27 was first paved in 1914, and in the mid-1920s, Route 108 was paved. Farmers continued to use horse-drawn wagons until about 1920 when motor trucks were generally available. Other new technologies representative of early twentieth century farms include concrete block construction and self-supporting gambrel roof trusses.



Twentieth-Century Expansion

Damascus thrived in the 1920s, due to improved roads. In 1914, the State had a program to connect counties with the port city of Baltimore. The program could not pave roads in incorporated towns. At this time the incorporation of Damascus was dissolved to make way for the paving of Route 27. This road provided access to the National Road leading to Baltimore, and was the first paved road connecting Washington and Frederick. In the mid-1920s, the road from Damascus to Laytonsville (Route 108), Damascus Road, was paved as a two-lane concrete road. Local landowners planted sycamore trees

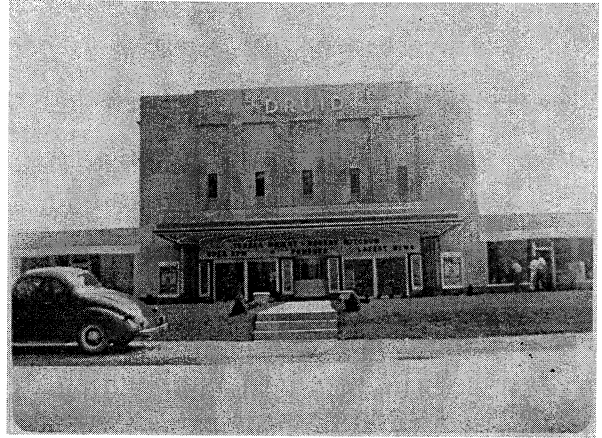
along a four-mile stretch of the road between Jarl Drive and Griffith Road as part of a statewide beautification project. Woodfield Road (Rt 124) was paved about 1932.⁴

Following road improvements, the community of Damascus thrived. The post office, which had been closed since 1908, re-opened in 1923. The Damascus Community Fair was organized in 1927, in order

⁴Jill Teunis, "Reminders of History along the Roadsides in Damascus," in *The Damascus Gazette*, 1-10-2001, and "Woodfield Community Remembers its Close-Knit Roots," 4-4-2001.

to educate farmers and their families and to promote community spirit. Other examples of the vitality of Damascus during this era include the opening of the Bank of Damascus (1921) and the accreditation of Damascus High School (1924).⁵

The period after World War II was marked by growth and expansion. To service the growing population, the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1944.⁶ The Damascus Recreation Center, established in the 1940s, provided bowling alleys, pool tables and a restaurant. Boyer and Cramer opened their hardware store in 1947, reviving a general store that first opened in the c1890s and closed during the Depression.⁷ The Damascus High School opened in 1950.



The Druid Theatre, a 400-seat theatre that opened in 1947, was the first fully air-conditioned theater in the Damascus area. The theatre, designed after Washington's Apex Theatre (no longer standing) operated until the 1970s. The theatre is named for its original owner Druid Clodfelter.

PROTECTION OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

The *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* and the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code, are designed to protect and preserve Montgomery County's historic and architectural heritage. When an historic resource is placed on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, the adoption action officially designates the property as an historic site or historic district, and subjects it to the further procedural requirements of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Designation of historic sites and districts highlights the values important in maintaining the individual character of the County and its various communities. The County's preservation program provides a rational system for evaluating, protecting, and enhancing the County's historic and architectural heritage that benefits present and future generations of County residents. The challenge is weaving protection of this heritage into the County's planning program in order to maximize community support for preservation while limiting infringement on private property rights.

Once designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, historic resources are subject to the protection of the ordinance. Any substantial changes to the exterior of a resource or its environmental setting must be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission and a historic area work permit issued under the provisions of the County's Preservation Ordinance. The environmental setting for each site is the entire parcel on which the resource is located. The environmental setting of a historic resource can be modified at a later stage, generally when the property is subdivided. In addition to protecting designated resources from unsympathetic alteration and insensitive redevelopment, the County's Preservation Ordinance also empowers the County's Department of Permitting Services and the Historic Preservation Commission to prevent the demolition of historic buildings through neglect.

⁵Jill Teunis, "Fair is Part of Damascus History," in *The Damascus Gazette*, 9-9-1998.

⁶Sign on present Fire Department building.

⁷Jill Teunis, "Local Damascus Hardware Store is Family Business," in *The Damascus Gazette*, 10-2-1996.

Three designated historic sites are in the Damascus Master Plan area: the Druid Theater, #11/6-2; Mendelssohn Terrace, #10/12; and the Perry G. Etchison Farm, #15/23. These sites have been designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and this Plan reconfirms that designation, with the environmental settings and descriptive language included in the original designation.

The Historic Preservation Commission is in the process of reviewing the historic resources within the Damascus Master Plan area to determine if they are eligible for designation on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. The resources in Planning Area 11 and Planning Area 14 are currently under review, and the resources in Planning Area 10 and Planning Area 15 will be completed as time and staff resources allow. Resources in the Damascus Planning Area currently included on the *Locational Atlas* are listed below. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are nominated for additional to the *Locational Atlas*.

Planning Area 10: Bennett and Little Bennett Watershed

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| 10/1 | Friendship | 10/20 | James W. Burdette Tenant Farm |
| 10/3 | John Moxley House | 10/21 | Damascus Camp Meeting |
| 10/5 | John D. Purdum House | 10/23 | C.E. Purdum Farm |
| 10/7 | G. Boyer House | 10/27 | Samuel B. Watkins House |
| 10/10 | John L. Purdum House | 10/28 | Basil Beall Farm |
| 10/14 | Ingalls Farm | 10/29 | Ed Beale Farm |
| 10/15 | Harold Watkins House | 10/37 | Glaze Farm |
| 10/17 | Joseph Burdette House | 10/38 | Kings Distillery Site |
| 10/18 | Burdette/Riddle House and Barn | | |

Planning Area 11: Damascus and Vicinity

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|-------|------------------------|
| 11/1 | Perry Watkins House | 11/15 | Kemp-Biggs Farm |
| 11/2 | Boyer House | 11/17 | Ezekial Moxley House |
| 11/3 | William Bowman Farm | 11/19 | Elisha Warfield Farm |
| 11/4 | Nathan Burdette House | 11/20 | Widow Hammond Farm |
| 11/5 | Sheckles House | 11/21 | Rezin Bowman Farm |
| 11/6-4 | Druid Clodfelter House* | 11/22 | George Gue Farm |
| 11/10 | Kingstead Farm | 11/23 | Rezin Duvall Log House |
| 11/11 | Luther K. Miller House and Mill Site | 11/24 | Frank Duvall Farm |
| 11/13 | Young Cemetery | 11/25 | Howard Day House |
| 11/14 | Gartrell/E. Brooke Lee Farm | 11/29 | Ira Jones Farm* |

Planning Area 14: Goshen, Woodfield, Cedar Grove and Vicinity

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|
| 14/2 | Rezin Duvall Farm | 14/13 | Mobley-Howard House |
| 14/3 | Etchison-Warfield House | 14/14 | James & Eliza Bowen House |
| 14/4 | Jefferson and Florence Duvall | 12/33 | Franklin King (Coleman) Farm |
| 14/11 | Scott-Etchison House | 14/34 | Darby-Green Farm; Sunrise Farm |
| 14/12 | Hawkins Farm and Creamery Site | | |

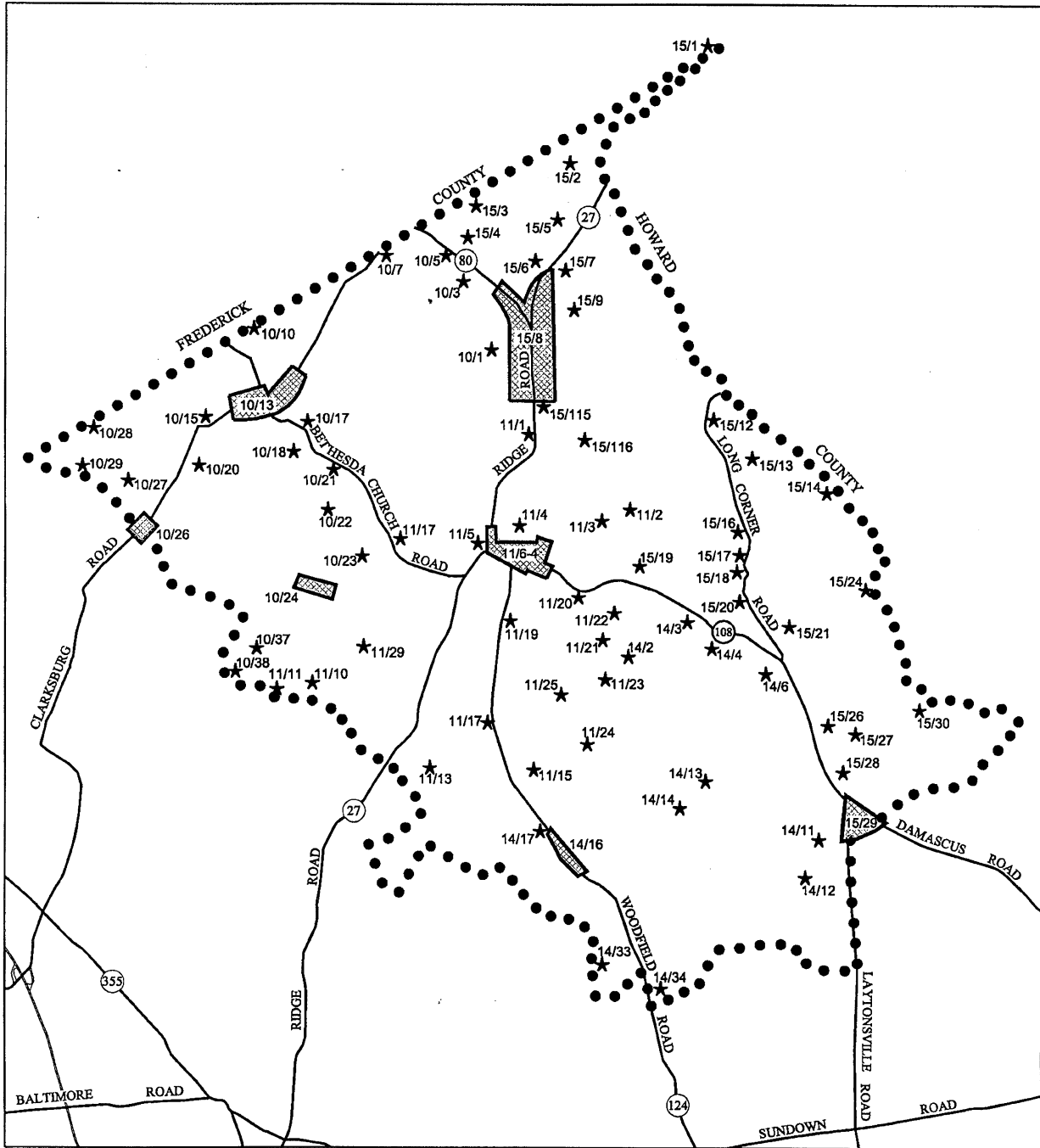
Planning Area 15: Patuxent Watershed Conservation Area

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|-------|------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|
| 15/1 | Parr's Spring | 15/16 | Brandenburg Log Tobacco House |
| 15/2 | Matthew Molesworth House | 15/17 | William Brandenburg House |
| 15/3 | Renzin Moxley Farm | 15/19 | Warthan/Day Farm |
| 15/4 | Al Baker House | 15/20 | Mt. Lebanon Church and Cemetery |
| 15/5 | Joshua Molesworth | 15/21 | Madison Etchison House |
| 15/6 | Becraft House | 15/24 | Wilson Warfield |
| 15/7 | Brown Log Tobacco House | 15/26 | Fred Wathens |
| 15/9 | Captain Claggett/Hilton Farm | 15/27 | Lyde Griffith House and Cemetery |
| 15/10 | Gue-Thompson Log House | 15/28 | Moore House |
| 15/12 | Thompson-Woodfield Farm | 15/30 | Log Barn |
| 15/13 | Harold Mullinix House | 15/115 | Friendship Church* |
| 15/14 | Mullinix Store | 15/116 | Inez Ziegler McAbee House* |

Historic Communities

- | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 10/13 | Browningsville Historic District | 14/16 | Woodfield Historic District |
| 10/24 | Purdum Community | 15/8 | Claggettville Community |
| 10/26 | Lewisdale Community | 15/29 | Etchison Community |

Damascus Historic Sites



- Master Plan Area Boundary
- ★ Sites Identified in County Atlas of Historic Sites
- 10/17 Historic Site Number
- ▨ Historic Districts

