

**BA-2564**  
**East Towson African American Survey District**  
**Towson, Baltimore County**  
**1869-1940s**

East Towson is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, specifically the pre-Civil War development of an African-American neighborhood in a predominately white community. The history of the district dates from the purchase of one-and-a-quarter acres of land by Daniel Harris in September 1853. This is believed to be the first documented African-American landholding in Towson, and is among the oldest such ethnic enclave in Baltimore County. By 1927, the community was ninety-five percent improved with single-family dwellings, social buildings, a school, and religious structures. Many of the current homeowners and tenants living in the neighborhood are descendents of the first African-American residents.

Architecturally, East Towson illustrates distinctive vernacular characteristics of a particular architectural style and period, specifically the Queen Anne and Gothic Revival styles of the late 19th century and the Craftsman style of the early 20th century. East Towson as a whole is representative of an important phase of architectural development in Baltimore County, illustrating the dilution of popular architectural styles to more efficiently meet the needs of the neighborhood, and the builders' untrained abilities to execute the fashionable ornamentation. Several of the freestanding structures in East Towson are twin dwellings, surreptitiously providing multiple-family housing on narrow rectangular building lots typically occupied by single-family houses. Thus, East Towson provided lower cost housing in a more suburban neighborhood, rather than the urban setting their economic status typically perpetuated.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-2564

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic East Towson African American Survey District

other

### 2. Location

street and number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Towson \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity

county Baltimore County

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

name multiple ownership

street and number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone Unavailable

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courthouse tax map and parcel: tax map 70

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	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	76
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social	
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	76
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
			<b>Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory</b>	
			76	

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## 7. Description

Inventory No. BA-2564

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### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Architecturally, East Towson illustrates distinctive vernacular characteristics of a particular architectural style and period, specifically the Queen Anne and Gothic Revival styles of the late 19th century and the Craftsman style of the early 20th century. East Towson as a whole is representative of an important phase of architectural development in Baltimore County, illustrating the dilution of popular architectural styles to more efficiently meet the needs of the neighborhood, and the builders' untrained abilities to execute the fashionable ornamentation. Several of the freestanding structures in East Towson are twin dwellings, surreptitiously providing multiple-family housing on narrow rectangular building lots typically occupied by single-family houses. Thus, East Towson provided lower cost housing in a more suburban neighborhood, rather than the urban setting their economic status typically perpetuated.

A total of 76 properties are extant in East Towson with 70 of these originally built as dwellings. The materials and technologies used in the construction of the buildings in East Towson are not overwhelmingly original. Extant elements include the stucco-clad masonry and exposed stone foundations, decorative wood shingle cladding and weatherboard siding, molded surrounds, gable roofs with overhanging eaves and boxed cornices, exposed rafters, wrap-around and inset porches with turned columns and brackets, and steeply pitched gabled pediments with molded entablatures. The use of log construction has been confined to a single example, although a number of log structures from the mid-19th century were noted to have existed. Modern materials have been introduced, including the replacement of wood sash with metal sash and the re-cladding of exterior walls with asbestos shingles, asphalt siding, aluminum siding, and vinyl siding. These modern materials, many viewed as reversible, largely obscure or replace the historic materials that originally ornamented the exterior of the buildings.

Twin dwellings and duplexes are popular forms throughout East Towson. The form of a duplex dwelling in East Towson is primarily a two bay wide dwelling rising two stories high featuring a front-gable roof. Duplexes are not easily discernable from single-family dwellings because of their similar forms and the single entrance on the facade. The dwellings, generally providing housing for a single family, are typically large scale with rectangular or square plans. A number of modest houses are extant, including bungalows and at least one shotgun house. However, much of the early construction techniques and designs practiced in the mid-19th century have been largely obscured from view by modern materials.

Twin dwellings are easily discernable due to their double entry facades. Five examples of twin dwellings are located in East Towson at 318-320 Lennox Avenue (BA-1012), 407-409 Jefferson Avenue (BA-1039), 404-406 East Pennsylvania Avenue (BA-1049), 432 East Pennsylvania Avenue (BA-1081), and 315 a&b Lennox Avenue (BA-2631). The dwelling on Jefferson Avenue is the earliest example of a twin dwelling in East Towson, constructed during the late 19th century. This form features a four bay façade with a door at each end. It is capped with a side-gable roof and each section shares a central-interior chimney. The early 20th century twin dwelling on East Pennsylvania is similar in that it also has side-gable roof and features a four-bay-wide façade. This dwelling is two-and-a-half stories in height and has two interior chimneys in the rear of the dwelling. A later example of a twin dwelling is located at 432 East Pennsylvania Avenue. This house stands two-and-a-half stories high and is four bays wide on the first story and two bays wide on the second story. Both feature a front gable dormer and paired windows and the dwelling is capped with a side-gable roof.

Styles represented throughout East Towson include Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Art Deco. Representative examples of the Gothic Revival are located at 413 Jefferson Avenue (BA-1001), 310 Lennox Avenue (BA-1013), 312 Lennox Avenue (BA-1014), and 320 East Pennsylvania (BA-1048). Characteristics typical of Gothic Revival dwellings in East Towson include a two-and-a-half-story height, and a side-gable roof with a steeply pitched center cross gable. The dwelling at 411 Pennsylvania Avenue (BA-1055) features a lancet window in the center cross gable.

A selection of Queen Anne style dwellings in East Towson include 315 Lennox Avenue (BA-1008), 317 Lennox Avenue (BA-1009), 406 Virginia Avenue (BA-1032), 412 Fairmont Avenue (BA-1036), 300 East Pennsylvania Avenue (BA-1043), 423 East

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Pennsylvania Avenue (BA-1058), and 410 Railroad Avenue (BA-1068). Many of the dwellings in East Towson lack any stylistic characteristics features but rather lean the form as the determining factor in deciding a style. A total of 35 dwellings in East Towson feature front gable roofs with the majority of these falling under the Queen Anne style. A few of these dwellings use ornament as well as a front gable roof that link it to the Queen Anne style. For example, 406 Virginia Avenue is two-and-a-half stories high, and exhibits a front-gable roof with a center cross gable on the side elevation. The gables are clad with variegated wood shingles and contain compass-head 2/2 windows. A modest version of this dwelling is at 423 East Pennsylvania Avenue. This dwelling has a front gable roof, rises two stories, and measures three bays deep. It does not include any center cross gables on the side elevation and has been reclad with vinyl siding. Three Queen Anne-style dwellings within East Towson do not share the ubiquitous front-gable-roof form. The house at 315 Lennox Avenue features an T-shaped footprint with a wrap-around porch covering the first story. It has a canted corner bay on the first story and the porch posts have lace-like brackets. The dwelling at 412 Fairmont Avenue rises two-and-a-half stories and is capped with a side-gable roof. Queen Anne-style characteristics include a two story canted projecting bay on the façade and corner brackets with turned posts on the porch. The dwelling at 300 East Pennsylvania Avenue exhibits a T-shaped footprint, and the gables are clad with variegated wood shingles that contain compass-head 2/2 windows.

A small collection of Colonial Revival-style dwellings are extant in East Towson. The dwelling at 318 East Pennsylvania Avenue (BA-1078) is two-and-a-half stories high and measures two bays wide. It is capped with a side-gable roof and a gable wall dormer is centered on the façade. The one-and-a-half story Cape Cod dwelling at 414 Fairmont Avenue (BA-2979) is three bays wide and includes features such as a center entrance, gable dormers, and a center-interior chimney.

The Carver School at 300 Lennox Avenue (BA-1075) is the only Art Deco-style building in East Towson. Constructed in 1939, this concrete building is covered with stucco and is two-stories high with an H-shaped footprint. Characteristics typical of Art Deco buildings include smooth wall surfaces (typically stucco), geometric motifs such as zigzags and chevrons, and vertical emphasis above the roof line. The Carver School features a stucco wall surface and a flat roof with a stepped parapet.

Three examples of the Craftsman style are extant in East Towson, located at 318-320 Lennox Avenue (BA-1012), 441a East Pennsylvania Avenue (BA-1063), and 345 Eudowood Lane (BA-2978). The most stylized Craftsman-style dwelling in East Towson is the one on East Pennsylvania Avenue. This dwelling rises one-and-a-half stories in height and is capped with a hipped roof. It features an inset porch supported with battered posts on brick piers. The hipped-roof dormer on the façade contains three lattice casement windows. The twin dwelling at 318-320 Lennox Avenue is capped with a side-gable roof that covers an inset porch. Two shallow shed-roof dormers are on the façade. The dwelling at 345 Eudowood Lane is one story high and is capped with a side-gable roof that covers the inset porch. The porch is supported with battered wood posts.

Within the community there is a church, parsonage, social hall, school, store, and a warehouse. The first four of these buildings are clustered near one another on Jefferson Avenue. The church and parsonage both reflect the Gothic Revival style. The previously mentioned school exhibits Art Deco characteristics. The store is within a modest example of a Queen Anne-style dwelling and is located at the corner of Pennsylvania and Fairmont Avenues. The warehouse is a vernacular building clad with wood shingles and is located at the southeastern edge of the neighborhood on Eudowood Lane.

The high number of houses within East Towson have been demolished. The late-20th-century development of Towson has infringed upon the edges of East Towson, causing a loss of building stock. Moreover, within the interior of the neighborhood, several historic buildings have been demolished. The location of the buildings is clearly marked by vacant lots that appear throughout East Towson.

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## 8. Significance

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

<b>Specific dates</b>	1869-1940s	<b>Architect/Builder</b>	Unknown
<b>Construction dates</b>	1869-1940s		

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.)

East Towson is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, specifically the pre-Civil War development of an African-American neighborhood in a predominately white community. The history of this property dates from the purchase of one-and-a-quarter acres of land by Daniel Harris in September 1853. This is believed to be the first documented African-American landholding in Towson, and is among the oldest such ethnic enclave in Baltimore County. Further, manumitted slaves and/or descendents of former slaves, many of who were owned by Charles Ridgely, populated the neighborhood. Hampered by the low economic status of the residents, development in the 19th century was slow, increasing after the turn of the 20th century. The setting of the property, building styles, and construction materials were guided by the limited economic status of the residents and their desire to establish a neighborhood of their own without the assistance of white architects, builders, and craftsmen. By 1927, the community was ninety-five percent improved with single-family dwellings, social buildings, a school, and religious structures. Many of the current homeowners and tenants living in the neighborhood are descendents of the first African-American residents.

East Towson was deliberately established in this location, north of Baltimore City, because of its close proximity to Hampton. This late-18th-century dwelling, located to the north/northwest of East Towson, was home to Charles Ridgely and his wife, Rebecca Dorsey. The neighborhood now known as East Towson was a small portion of the original 1,500-acre tract of Hampton. Upon their 28th birthday, manumitted slaves, granted freedom after the death of Ridgely in 1830, chose to establish their residential neighborhood within close proximity to their former home. Further, the adjacent community of Towson afforded the residents of East Towson with a variety of economic opportunities.

Rather than extend the urban setting being established within Towson-proper, East Towson was created as a separate enclave that maintained an individual sense of community, despite its economic and governmental dependence on that neighboring town. This was accomplished through the siting of buildings on large lots that allowed for spacious yards and outbuildings. The building lots laid out first in the 1850s and those created after the turn of the 20th century reflect suburban design, with the intentional presentation of freestanding housing lots. Like many suburban communities in Baltimore County, the original roads transverse East Towson are a continuation of existing transportation routes.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows the community of East Towson was predominantly African-American, however, there were a few white residents listed. Approximately ninety percent of the residents listed in the census were from Maryland. Other places of origin include Virginia, Jamaica, District of Columbia, and Portugal. The majority of the residents in East Towson did not own their property but rather rented. Rental values ranged from eight to twenty dollars. This is comparatively cheaper than other African-American enclaves in Baltimore County, such as Haltethorpe, Church Lane, and Schwartz Avenue.

A few of the residents listed in the 1930 census include George Scott, Thomas Ballard, George Tyler, James Morris, Florence

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Mack, Fannie Rose, Robert Walker, John Pinkney, and Jerome Dolman. Several women were listed as heads of households. Many of the households listed anywhere from four to nine people residing in the house. Male occupations listed in the census include school bus driver, hospital laborer, building laborer, chauffeur, U.S. Coast Guard laborer, stenographer, mail carrier, and machine factory laborer. Female occupations included cook, mid-wife, maid, and laundress.

East Towson has maintained its original suburban plan. It is cohesively bounded by Virginia Avenue to the west and Towson Boulevard on the south, with resources roughly fronting both sides Railroad Avenue on the east and Pennsylvania Avenue on the north. However, the setting of the property has been compromised by the construction of modern buildings in response to the expansion of Towson. This modern construction wraps around the property on all four sides, marked by four-lane transportation corridors. The modern buildings, consisting of many high-rise structures, are not obscured from view from within East Towson, rather they infringe on its edges and distract from the suburban neighborhood's one- and two-story historic improvements.

Further, modern construction has occurred within the confines of the neighborhood, particularly along the edges where development from adjacent communities has expanded. This is noted along Pennsylvania Avenue and in the northeastern and southeast corners of East Towson. Late-19th- and early-20th-century housing once improved nearly all the narrow rectangular lots of East Towson. However, a number of the dwellings along the borders of the neighborhood have been razed and replaced by late-20th century construction. Few historic structures remain at the western end of the community as a result of the expanding commercial and governmental activities of Towson, which is the county seat. Large-scale housing with commercial space on the first floor and office buildings have been constructed on the now-joined building lots that were created as part of East Towson, thereby blurring the edges of the neighborhood with that of Towson-proper. Furthermore, many of the historic structures in this section of East Towson have been lost in favor of parking lots.

Many of the historic buildings on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue have been lost, and non-consistent housing and commercial structures constructed. A modern housing development was established at the eastern end of this road. This turn-of-the-21st-century development was oriented away from the established neighborhood of East Towson, with principal access from Joppa Road to the north. Moreover, the paired dwellings face east/west onto a newly created road with sidewalks and driveways that further promote the concentrated nature of this modern enclave. This modern development required the razing of approximately five buildings and alteration to East Towson's early-20th-century suburban plan by the laying of a new road. A similar housing development was constructed in the southeastern corner of East Towson, with access from historic Eudowood Lane and Towson Road. The multiple-family housing units face the newly created Hendrickson Lane, which is laid at an angle rather than the straight configuration of the historic roads. The construction of this housing complex required the demolition of six historic buildings that contributed to the context of East Towson. Additionally, a modern church was constructed nearby on Eudowood Lane, resulting in the loss of five additional historic buildings.

The greatest impact to the integrity of the setting in East Towson is the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company transformer station of the west side of Railroad Avenue, between the historic railroad bed and Pennsylvania Avenue. This massive complex, surrounded by high metal fencing, is clearly visible from Railroad Avenue, Eudowood Lane, Fairmont Avenue, and Pennsylvania Avenue. The site was historically associated with the gas and electric company, but has since grown to occupy at least seven additional building lots along Railroad Avenue.

None of the resources in the district appear to be the work of trained architects, landscape architects, or artisans, although documentation has not yet been located to document otherwise. Rather, the secondary research that has been gathered indicates that many of the buildings were designed and constructed by the first residents, none of whom had training in this field. However, the workmanship of these early buildings suggest the first residents developed the necessary skills to design and construct their homes. During the second major period of development, primarily between 1915 and 1927, readily available, mass-produced ornamentation and fashionable building forms and styles were utilized throughout East Towson.

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### OWNERSHIP OF PROMINENT BUILDINGS AS OF NOVEMBER 2001

St. James African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church-- tax id # 920660220  
415 Jefferson Avenue Conference of AUMP Church, Inc. Baltimore County Courthouse  
tax map 70A/464 1203 Newport Gap Pike Liber 9740 Folio 487  
Wilmington, DE 19804

Towsontown Lodge -- id # 921450000  
411 Jefferson Avenue Stanley Stockwell Baltimore County Courthouse  
tax map 70A/449 1744 Aberdeen Road Liber 8970 Folio 447  
Baltimore, MD 21234

Carver High School/East Towson Carver Community Center--tax id # 902571443  
300 Lennox Avenue Baltimore County Baltimore County Courthouse  
tax map 70A/491 Baltimore, MD 21204 Liber 6796 Folio 589

Mount Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church--tax id # 923501100  
133 Chesapeake Avenue Mount Calvary AME Church, Inc. Baltimore County Courthouse  
tax map 70A/250 300 Eudowood Lane Liber 14929 Folio 186

Parsonage--tax id # 920660220  
413 Jefferson Avenue Conference of AUMP Church Baltimore County Courthouse  
tax map 70A/464 1203 Newport Gap Pike Liber 9740 Folio 487  
Wilmington, DE 19804

Maryland Etching Company--tax id # 923350642  
398 Eudowood Lane Technographics of Maryland, Inc. Baltimore County Courthouse  
tax map 70/891 P.O. Box 6737 Liber 9079 Folio 619  
Baltimore, MD

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. BA-2564

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See continuation sheet.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 47.945 acres  
Acreage of historical setting Unknown  
Quadrangle name Towson Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The East Towson survey district is bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, Fairmont Avenue, Eudowood Lane, Railroad Avenue, and Jefferson Avenue. The properties in East Towson have been historically associated with tax map 70 and 70a since their construction.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title	K. Baynard, Architectural Historian		
organization	E.H.T. Tracerics	dat	10/20/2002
street and number	1121 Fifth Street, NW	telephone	202/393-1199
city or town	Washington	state DC	zip code 20001

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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

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

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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.

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.

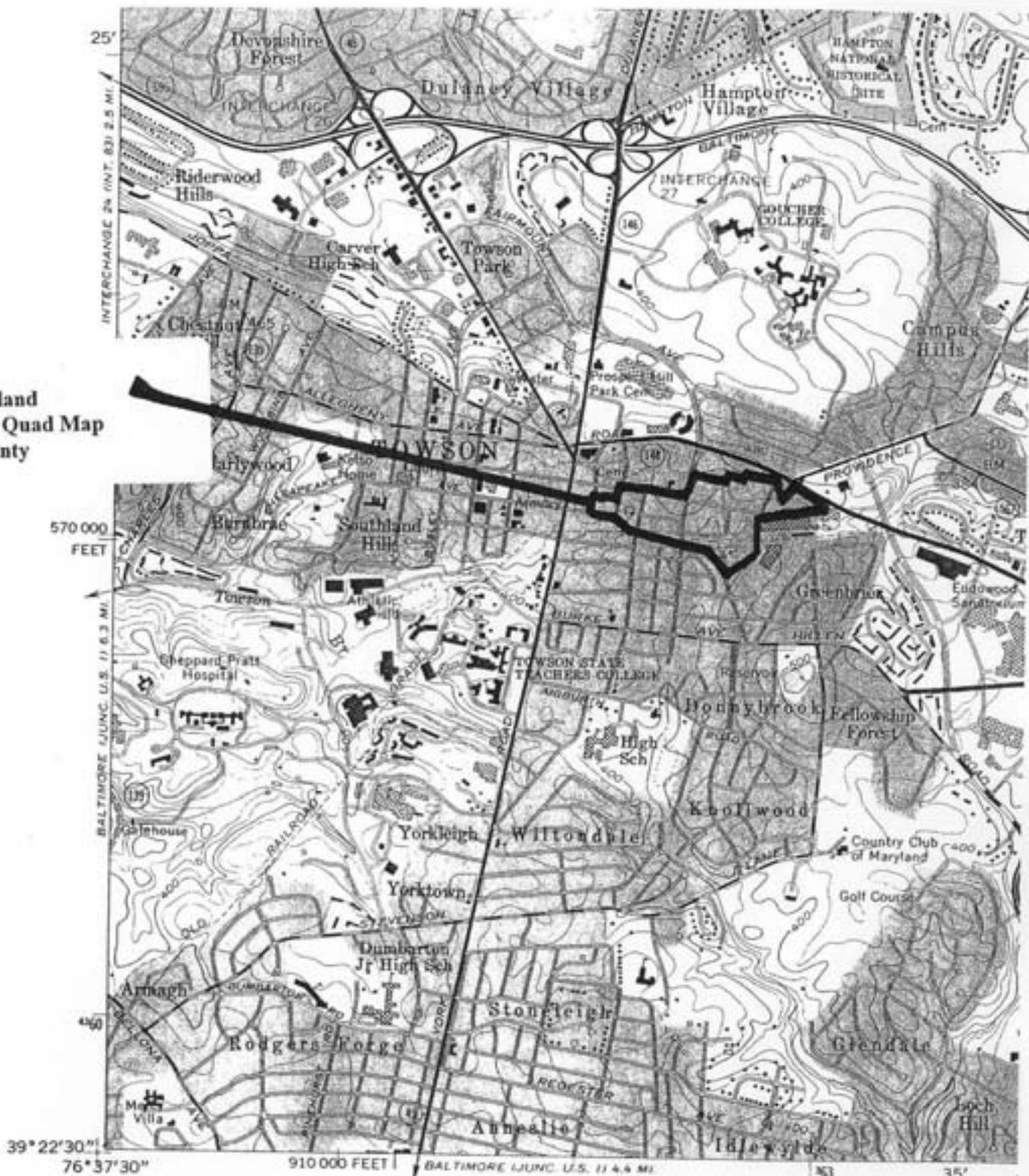
Sidney, J. C. Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850







**BA-2564**  
**East Towson**  
**Towson, Maryland**  
**Towson USGS Quad Map**  
**Baltimore County**



Mapped by the Army Map Service  
 Edited and published by the Geological Survey  
 Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and Maryland  
 Bureau of Control Surveys and Maps

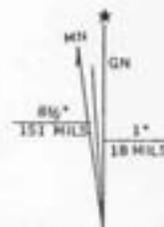
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs  
 taken 1943. Topography by planetable surveys 1944  
 Culture revised by the Geological Survey 1957

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
 10,000-foot grid based on Maryland coordinate system  
 1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
 zone 18, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only  
 landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled by the Geological Survey from  
 aerial photographs taken 1966 and 1974. This information not  
 field checked

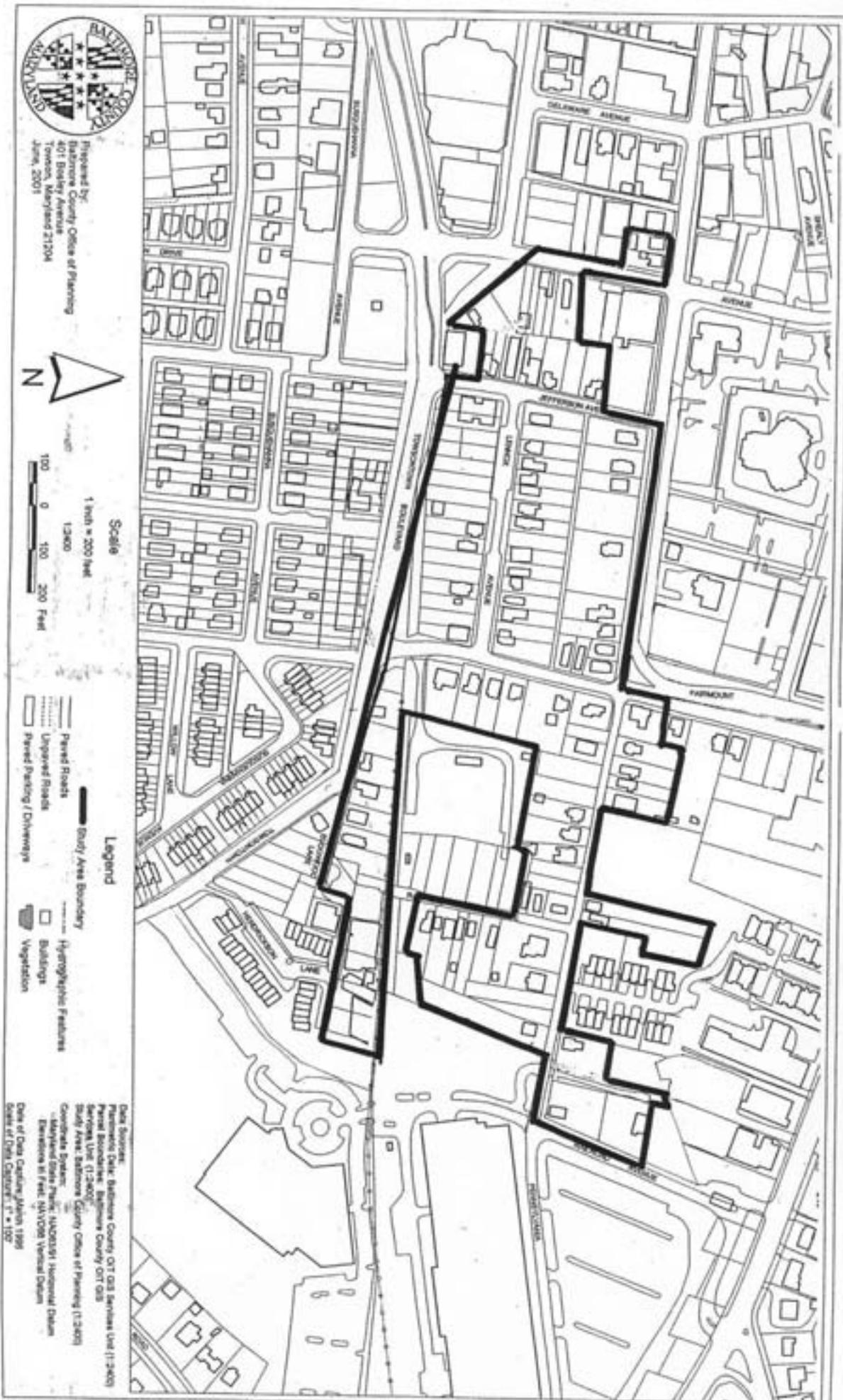
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH  
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

(BALTIMORE WEST)  
 5682 (1 SW)

# East Towson: Planimetric Data



Prepared by:  
 Baltimore County Office of Planning  
 401 Bowley Avenue  
 Towson, Maryland 21284  
 June, 2001



BA-2564  
 EAST TOWSON AFRICAN  
 AMERICAN SURVEY DISTRICT  
 BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD