

923-929 N. BROADWAY (ROWHOUSES)
Baltimore
Baltimore County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-1073

HABS
MD
4-BALT,
213-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service
Northeast Region
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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Location: 923-929 N. Broadway
Baltimore
Baltimore County
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Present Owner: Broadway Court Limited Partnership

Present Occupant: Vacant

Statement of Significance: 923-929 N. Broadway, situated between Ashland (formerly Chew) and Barnes Streets, are contributing structures within an expansion of the Middle East Planning Area Historic District. 923-929 N. Broadway are located two blocks west of this potentially eligible historic district and embody the architectural characteristics of the historic district. The buildings display the flat facades and simple ornamentation that characterize the unbroken rowhouse streetscapes of historic Baltimore residential areas. The form of 923-929 N. Broadway, especially the full-height 1st floor window openings, full 3rd story, and Italianate cornice suggest a mid-19th century date of construction.

Descriptive Information

923, 925, 927, and 929 N. Broadway are brick, three-bay mid-block rowhouses facing west. Although the buildings are unified by a single wood Italianate cornice with end brackets, this device may be a later addition. The rowhouses, which rest on lighted basements, have flat roofs that slope back behind the cornice. All of the rowhouses feature a sidehall entry on the south and the graduated window openings that are a hallmark of Baltimore rowhouses. Window openings on the 1st floor match the height of the door openings. The front facades of 923 and 925 N. Broadway have been clad in formstone. 923 N. Broadway, at the south end of the row, has a recent concrete block south wall at the location of the former party wall between 923 and its recently demolished neighbor to the south. 923, 925, and 929 N. Broadway are in deteriorated condition; 927 N. Broadway, which was gutted by fire, is in ruinous condition.

The buildings are situated in a neighborhood of similar rowhouses. Broadway, one of Baltimore's major thoroughfares, is an esplanade with wide median that extends from the Northwest Harbor of the Patapsco at Fells Point to Harford Road. Johns Hopkins Medical Center is approximately 3 blocks south of the site. The Penn Central tracks are approximately four blocks north. The neutral ground between Johns Hopkins and this site has been denuded of trees and grass; the neutral ground to the north is planted with an allee of trees. A narrow alley, paved with cobblestones, is situated to the rear of the site.

The front facades of 927 and 929 N. Broadway are virtually identical. Both display segmental brick arches over the basement, 1st, and 2nd floor windows with no lintel or framing device above the 3rd floor windows. Both have marble sills below the 1st floor windows, wood below the 2nd, and brick below the 3rd. The front facades of both buildings are executed entirely in stretchers. 929 N. Broadway has granite steps; 927 N. Broadway, marble. 927 N. Broadway displays a soldier course below its cornice. 927 N. Broadway retains a segmental arch above the sidehall entry; the top of the original entry at 929 Broadway has failed and been reworked with recent brick. Most of the windows as well as the door opening at 929 have been boarded up. Some one-over-one windows, which are not original to the building, are visible on the front facade.

923 and 925 N. Broadway have been entirely clad in formstone, which covers the frieze of the Italianate cornice. The original size and configuration of openings, which matches those of 927 and 929 N. Broadway, appears to have been retained. The original marble steps also remain. The formstone, which displays a rusticated ashlar pattern, features arches with keystones above the openings. Windows and doors are missing. Some one-over-one sash remains. Both buildings have shallow vestibules. There is a panelled dado within the vestibule of 925 N. Broadway; the vestibule at 923 is detailed with lincrusta molding.

While the front facades of the four buildings are quite similar, the appearance of their rear (east) facades has developed in a more individual way over time. 923 and 925 N. Broadway share a chimney stack located between them as do 927 and 929 N. Broadway. All of the buildings appear to have had two openings per floor. All apparently had rear ells. The two-story brick ell extending back from 923

N. Broadway is the most elaborate and features a projecting 2nd-story oriel clad with French shingles. The ell has windows on its south and east sides; there are no windows on the north. The one-story ell attached to the rear of 925 N. Broadway adjoins the rear ell of 923 N. Broadway. The roof of the ell slopes north. Both the ell and the rear facade of 925 N. Broadway have been stuccoed. There is no ell at the rear of 927 N. Broadway, which was totally gutted in a fire. There are post holes between the 1st and 2nd floor and a band of recent brick between the 2nd and 3rd floor. Openings at the rear have flat brick arches. 929 N. Broadway has a one-story brick ell located on the south side of the building. Openings on the rear facade of 929 Broadway have been narrowed and shortened by the addition of recent brick and cinder block.

Historical Information

923-929 N. Broadway, situated between Ashland (formerly Chew) and Barnes Streets, are contributing structures within an expansion of the Middle East Planning Area Historic District. The Middle East Planning Area Historic District, the boundaries of which were drawn to correspond to the area of a HUD UDAG grant, was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. 923-929 N. Broadway are located two blocks west of this historic district and embody the architectural characteristics of the district. The buildings display the flat facades and simple ornamentation that characterize the unbroken rowhouse streetscapes of historic Baltimore residential areas. These buildings differ slightly from the general character of the Middle East Planning Area Historic District in that they are three stories, rather than two stories, in height. They may also be older than the ca. 1875 buildings in the planning area because of their location on Broadway, a major thoroughfare closer to the center of the city. The form of 923-929 N. Broadway, especially the full-height 1st floor window openings, full 3rd story, and Italianate cornice suggest a mid-19th century date of construction.

Map evidence suggests that the buildings were probably built between 1856 and 1876. The block on the west side of Broadway between Chew (Ashland) and Barnes is shaded on the 1856 Woods Map of Baltimore; the east side is not. The more detailed 1876 Hopkins Map of Baltimore shows structures on the east side of Broadway between Chew (Ashland) and E. Biddle. The buildings all appear in the 1890 Sanborn Map of Baltimore, the earliest Sanborn Map of the city. The 1890 Sanborn shows that the area was well-developed with rowhouses. "Bohemian Hall" was located immediately north of Barnes Street on the west side of Broadway; a primary school (the 1944 Sanborn Map notes that this school was constructed in 1876), English German Public School, and a branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library were all located within a one block radius of the site. There was a store at 931 N. Broadway at the corner of N. Broadway and Barnes. Additional non-residential uses nearby included a coal and wood yard located across the alley from the primary school, as well as a brewery and a bakery located in rowhouses across the alley behind the 900 block of N. Broadway.

The irregularity of the rear ells of the 900 block of Broadway in comparison with other nearby rows suggests either an earlier period of development or several individual developments within the block. 923-929 N. Broadway are all shown with one-story, two-room rear ells. The form of the ell at 925 is consistent with the ell shown on the Sanborn Map; the ell at 929 may be the west room of the two

room ell. Both 923 and 925 N. Broadway display two story structures, probably stables, at the rear property line adjoining the alley running between Barnes and Chew (now Ashland) Streets.

The 1902 Sanborn Map depicts more uniform rear ells than those shown on the earlier map. The ells are located in the same position shown on the earlier map. However, unlike the earlier map, the 1902 Sanborn Map shows the rear walls of the ells occupying the same plane. A projecting bay is attached to the rear wall of a one-story ell at 923 N. Broadway. The ells shown on the 1902 map are outlined; no interior walls are detailed. This contrasts with the more specific delineation of the 1890 map as well as the delineation of rear ells immediately south of 923-929 N. Broadway. By 1902 the English German Public School at the corner Ashland and Bond Street had become a "Colored School." 931 N. Broadway had lost its commercial projecting awning and was used for "bicycle repair."

The 1914 Sanborn Map once again shows changes to the rear ells. Both the two-story rear ell at 923 N. Broadway and the one-story ell at 925 N. Broadway are shown as they appear today. The ell at 927 N. Broadway has been eliminated and replaced with a shallow two-story addition (perhaps a stair) centered on the rear facade with a one-story outbuilding adjacent to the south wall of the ell at 929 N. Broadway. The position of the shallow addition is consistent with the physical evidence of postholes and brick infill now visible at the rear of 927. The ell shown at the rear of 929 N. Broadway occupies the same location as the ell shown in the 1914 Sanborn Map but appears less deep than the extension depicted there. 923, 925, and 929 N. Broadway all have 2 story structures at the rear property line. The general neighborhood appears much the same. 931 N. Broadway is labelled "Auto Supplies" with a 105 gallon gasoline tank located on the north edge of the property on Barnes Street. The Baltimore Chewing Gum Company is shown on Ashland near Bond.

No 1928 Sanborn Maps of this section of Baltimore can be located. A paste-up that appears to date from 1944 shows the physical character of the 900 block of Broadway little changed from 1914. With the exception of 929 N. Broadway, the two-story structures at the rear of 923-929 Broadway have all been removed. 931 N. Broadway is still labelled "Auto Supplies" although the rear of the property is more highly developed. The 1944 paste-up reveals changes in racial composition and use in the area. While the neighboring blocks of rowhouses are noted as dwellings, many of the rowhouses facing N. Broadway are labelled as flats or stores. 923, 927, and 929 N. Broadway were dwellings at the time this map was made; 925 had been converted to flats. The public school at the corner of Ashland and Broadway is labelled "Colored." "Bethel Holy Tabernacle (Colored)" is shown at the former location of the Baltimore Chewing Gum Company and "Faith Baptist Church (Colored)" at the corner of N. Bond and Ashland, formerly the location of the English German and later public school. Bohemian Hall's building remains at the northwest corner of Broadway and Barnes, but the Sanborn Map shows it as a store with a hall on the 2nd floor.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Historic Views:

The following published collections of photographs depict the visual context of N. Broadway around the rowhouses, but not the 900 block of N. Broadway:

Kelly, Jacques. *The Pratt Library Album: Baltimore Neighborhoods in Focus*. Baltimore: Enoch Pratt Free Library, 1986.

1915 view of North Broadway looking south from North Avenue, p. 117.

Warren, Marian and Mame Warren. *Baltimore When She Was What She Used to Be: A Pictorial History 1850 - 1930*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

1911 view of North Broadway looking south from North Avenue, p. 76.

Laura Rice of the Maryland Historical Society stated that there were no historic photographs of the 900 block of Broadway in the Maryland Historical Society collection or at the Peale Museum.

B. Bibliography:

Hopkins, G.M. *City Atlas of Baltimore, Maryland and Environs*. Philadelphia: F. Bourquier, 1876. (Maryland Historical Society)

Middle East Historic District Vertical Files, Baltimore Commission on Architecture and Historic Preservation.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Baltimore, 1890, 1901-02, 1914-15, 1944 (rev. ca. 1953).

Shivers, Natalie W. *Those Old Placid Rows: The Aesthetic and Development of the Baltimore Rowhouse*. Baltimore: Maclay & Associates, 1981. (Baltimore Commission on Architecture and Historic Preservation)

Woods, John. *Map of Baltimore*, 1856, 1880. (Maryland Historical Society)

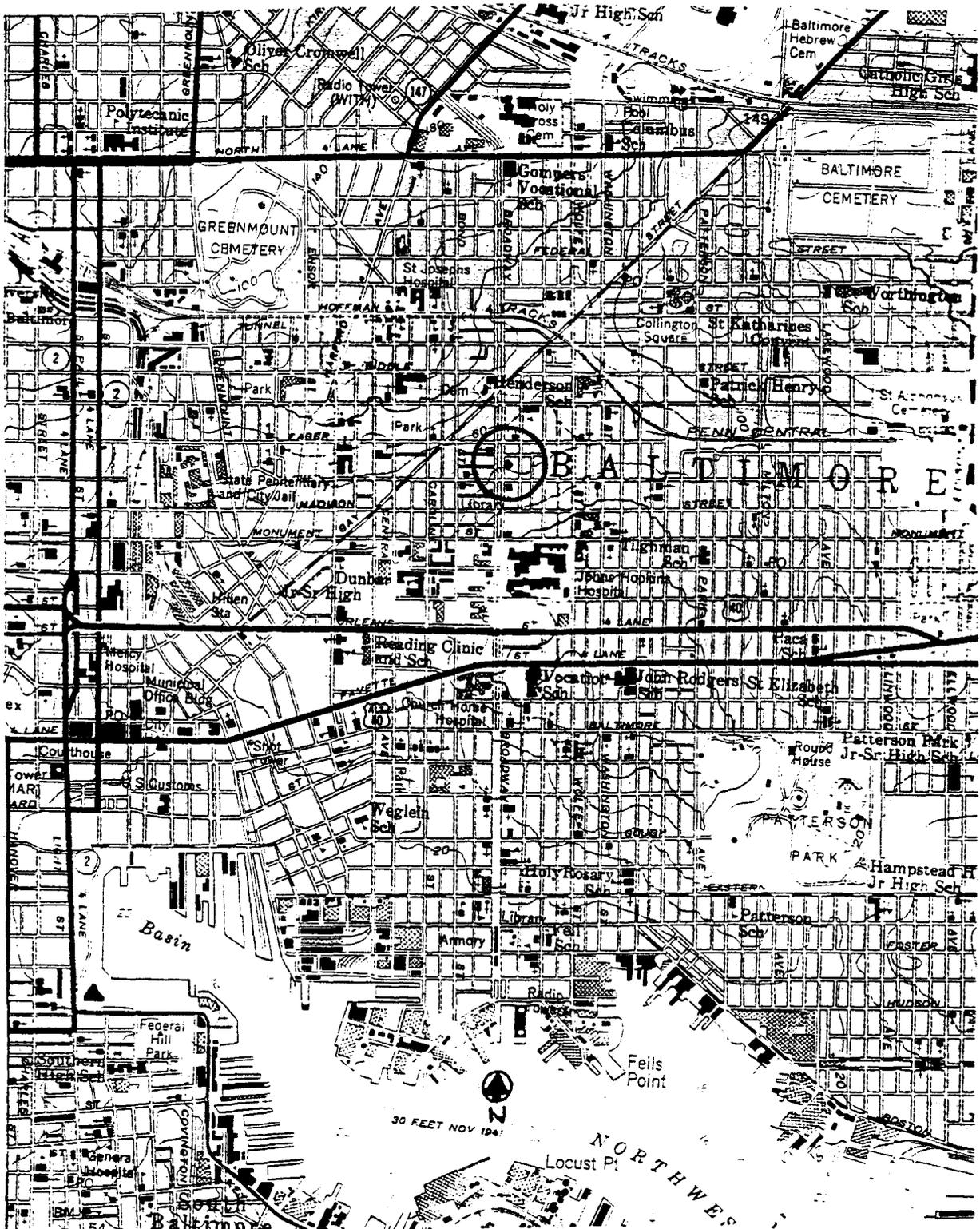
C. Likely Sources Not Investigated:

Research for this project consisted primarily of examination of historic maps. Information about the occupants of the rowhouses can be found in deed records, census records, and city directories. This information would also yield a more precise date of construction.

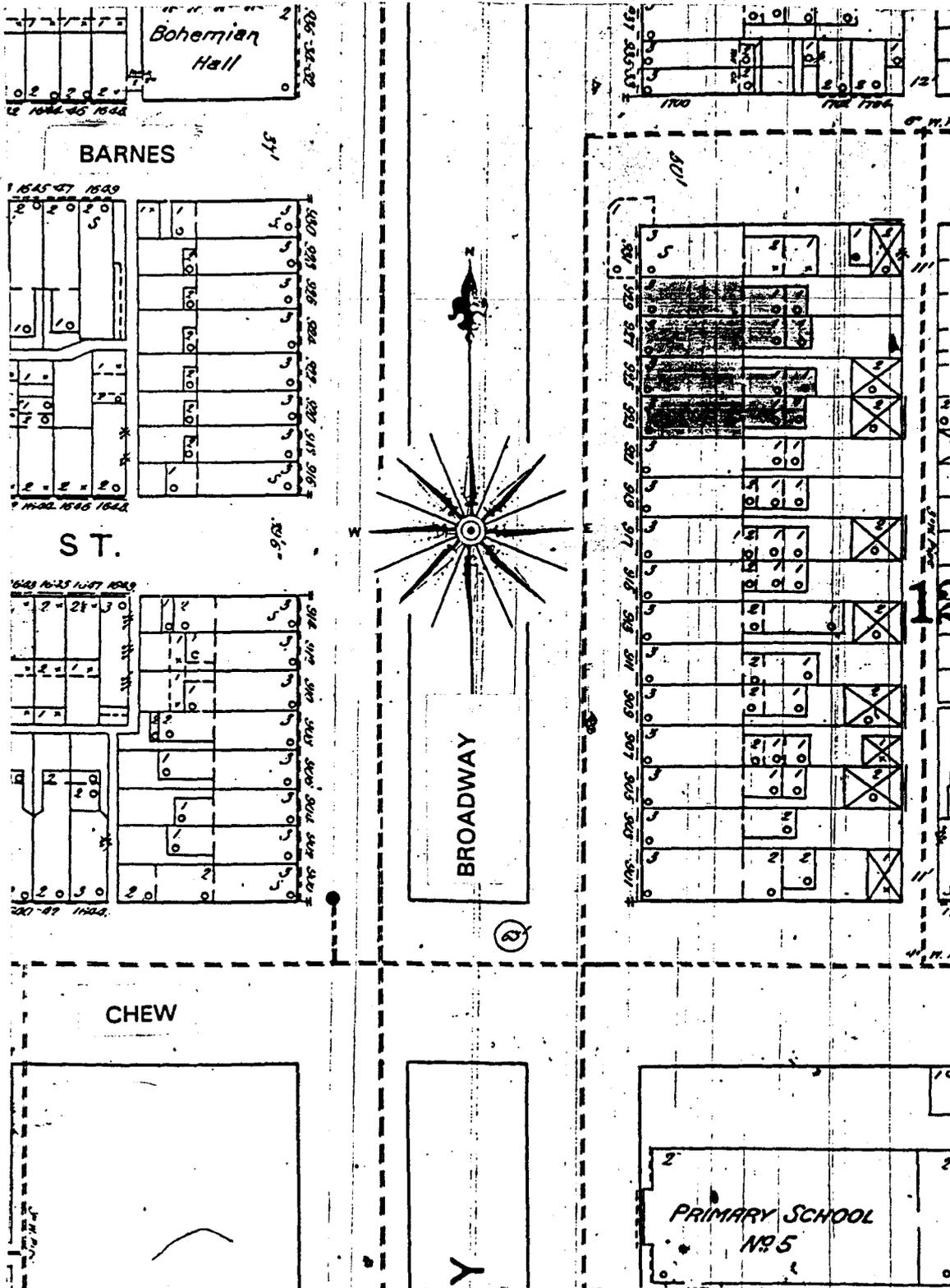
PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken to mitigate demolition of 923-929 N. Broadway for the construction of the Broadway Court Elderly Housing project, a 47 unit affordable housing project for senior citizens. Broadway Court is part of a larger revitalization project for the 900 and 1000 blocks of N. Broadway and is funded by a public-private partnership comprised of the Baltimore Department of Housing and Community Development, Johns Hopkins, the community, and Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse, Inc.

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Affiliation: Consultant to Broadway Court Ltd. Partnership
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LOCATION OF 923-929 NORTH BROADWAY
SOURCE: U.S.G.S. Baltimore East Quadrangle - Scale 1:24000



1890 PLANS OF 923-929 NORTH BROADWAY
SOURCE: 1890 Sanborn Map of Baltimore, Vol. 2, Plate 61

