

Historical Validation of Properties Located in Proposed Railroad Square Development Project Area

By: James R. Castle

What Makes a Building “Historic” in Maryland?

According to the Maryland Historical Trust, determining whether or not a building is "historic" is a three-step process that first involves Identification, followed by Evaluation, and finally Designation. Not all old buildings meet the legal or generally-accepted definitions of "historic", but it is important to note that there are different definitions, processes, and criteria used to evaluate historic significance.

Generally speaking, the first step in historic preservation projects, research, and documentation is the identification of potentially historic properties. For purposes of the National Register of Historic Places, properties must generally be at least 50 years old or older to be considered for listing. When properties are identified, researchers, consultants, owners, or community members may record basic information about a property including construction date, architectural style and notable features, important persons or events associated with the property, and take photographs to document the property. For archeological resources, this may involve historical research, examination of reports about other archeological resources in the area, and may include some ground disturbance to determine if resources do exist.

After a potentially historic property has been identified, its significance to local, state, or national history, architecture, and/or culture is evaluated against objective criteria. The most common set of criteria used for evaluation is the [National Register of Historic Places](#) Criteria for Eligibility.

To be eligible for the National Register, a property must demonstrate significance in terms of one or more of four broad criteria

- events or trends;
- association with individuals who made a demonstrable and lasting contribution;
- architectural merit;
- or the potential to yield information that will contribute to a better understanding of our past.

Significance is evaluated in a national, state, or local context.

In addition to demonstrating significance, a property must retain physical integrity to reflect that significance; it must not have been substantially altered since the period when the event occurred, or the person lived there.

- Architecturally significant properties must retain the majority of the features that characterize their type.
- Archeological sites must remain intact.

Local governments may determine their own criteria for evaluating historic properties, but these generally follow the National Register of Historic Places criteria. However, please contact your [local Historic Preservation Commission](#) for more information.¹

¹ All information located on MHT's website: https://mht.maryland.gov/research_designation.shtml

9 South Maple Avenue

The house located a 9 South Maple Avenue is referred to the Virginia Snoots House by locals. The location was platted as lot 74 by Leonard Smith in 1787. According to the Brunswick History Commission, "The Snoots house was built of logs, covered with weatherboard, the covered with Glasstex shingles. There is a fireplace, now covered, in the living room. The basement is under the original house, but not under its back addition." The History commission goes on to say, "There is an unusual construction on the second floor. This consists of logs that have been covered and topped, resulting in a shelf midway up the sidewalls. This gives the impression that the roof may have been raised and windows installed in order to produce a full second floor." ²

Berlin Lineage:

Berlin Lot 74 was first sold to William Oldham from Leonard Smith in a deed recorded on October 20, 1787 for 5 Pounds, 6 Pence (WR 7/607). It was one of the original first 8 lots of Berlin transferred. In 1792 Oldham sold lots 74 & 75 to George Shover for 42 Pounds (WR/ 11-371). Shover passes circa 1817 and his heirs sell lots 74 and 75 to Daniel Willard (JS/5/796). The 1840 US Census shows Daniel Willard and his large family living in the Petersville District (which Berlin was a part of). Willard passes circa 1848 and lot 74 sells to Peter Clark. The 1850 US census shows Peter Clark and his wife living in the Petersville District (in which Berlin was a part of). Clark sells the lot to Beniman Hood in 1857 (ES/10/291). The 1860 Census shows Hood living in the Petersville District (in which Berlin was a part of). Between the years 1881- and 1890 the lot is subdivided and is owned by a Phillips and a Harris as of 1890, the year Berlin was renamed Brunswick

A land map of Berlin from 1853 shows a structure on lot 74. A land map of Berlin dated 1865 shows three structures on the first three lots of what is now South Maple Avenue. A land map of 1873 Berlin shows four structures on the first four lots of South Maple Avenue and identify the home of Mary McDonald.

In summary, someone has lived in a structure on lot 74 since 1840. The structure that now exists on this lot most likely began as a smaller structure and was added on over the years leading up to 1890 Brunswick.

Events or Trends:

The structure on lot 75 was constructed in Berlin, a now non-existent Ghost Town located within Brunswick, MD. The significance of the year 1890 is the beginning of the railroad yard construction in 1890 that began the boomtown construction of Brunswick, leaving the Canal Village of Berlin behind. There are only 12 structures in existence from "Old Berlin":

1. **Snoots House**
2. **5 South Maple Ave**
3. **1 South Maple (Former Diner/Tavern/Store location)**
4. 21 West Potomac Street (Mrs. Himes Restaurant log cabin)
5. 35 West Potomac Street (Holmes House)
6. 13 North Maryland Ave (The Jordan House)
7. Apartment Building at Maryland & Potomac (Hotel in Berlin that was Relocated)
8. 127 West Potomac Street (the Beal House)
9. 1 North Virginia Ave (The Virts House)
10. 9 North Virginia Ave (Brightwell House)
11. 29 North Virginia Ave (Hogan House)
12. 15 South Maryland Ave (Gross House Circa 1840)

² Brunswick History Commission: Brunswick 100 Years of Memories, 1990, Pg 29

Architectural Merit:

The structure's original design was most likely a simple, rustic log cabin and later enhanced to exhibit a typical 1830's gable front home. This architectural design would have been typical in this area when both the railroad and canal arrived in Berlin in the mid 1830's. The structure is identified in the approved Brunswick Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

5 South Maple Avenue (Structure Located next to 9 South Maple)

The house located at 5 South Maple Avenue was platted as lot 75 by Leonard Smith on April 15, 1789 (WR/8/501). The deed contained a stipulation that a house was to be built within three years or the deed reverted back to Smith. Oldham is listed in the 1790 Frederick County Census (252/3619) as "William Oldham", thus establishing proof that someone lived on this lot in the year of 1790. In 1792 Oldham sold lots 74 & 75 to George Shover for 42 Pounds. Shover passes circa 1817 and his heirs sell lots 74 and 75 to Daniel Willard. Willard passes circa 1848 and lot 75 sells to Benjamin Philpot in 1848. Philpot sells to Thomas Crampton in 1857. Around 1871 Crampton sells to McDonald who lives on the property as of 1890, the year Berlin was renamed Brunswick.³ According to the Brunswick History Commission, "When the commuters walk past My Sister's Place en route to the station, they pass a high double house..."⁴

Lineage:

Berlin Lot 75 was first sold to William Oldham from Leonard Smith in a deed recorded on April 15, 1789 for 5 Pounds, 6 Pence (WR 8/501). In 1792 Oldham sold lots 74 & 75 to George Shover for 42 Pounds. Shover passes circa 1817 and his heirs sell lots 74 and 75 to Daniel Willard. In 1839 the lot is sold to Henry Deaver. In 1840's the lot was transferred to Peter Clark. Clark sold the lot to Benjamin Hood in 1857.⁵ Willard passes circa 1848 and lot 75 sells to Benjamin Philpot in 1848. Philpot sells to Thomas Crampton in 1857. Around 1871 Crampton sells to McDonald who lives on the property as of 1890, the year Berlin was renamed Brunswick.⁶

A land map of Berlin, dated 1865, shows three structures on the first three lots of what is now South Maple Avenue. A land map dated 1873 shows a structure owned by B. Hood on the lot.

In summary, someone has lived in a structure on lot 75 since 1790. The structure that now exists on this lot most likely began as a smaller structure and was added on over the years leading up to 1890 Brunswick.

³ David McIntosh, Some History About the Village of Berlin 1728-1890

⁴ Brunswick History Commission: 100 Years of Memories, 1990, Pg 29

⁵ David McIntosh, Some History About the Village of Berlin 1728-1890

⁶ David McIntosh, Some History About the Village of Berlin 1728-1890

Events or Trends:

The structure on lot 75 was constructed in Berlin, a now non-existent Ghost Town located within Brunswick, MD. The significance of the year 1890 is the beginning of the railroad yard construction in 1890 that began the boomtown construction of Brunswick, leaving the Canal Village of Berlin behind. There are only 12 structures in existence from "Old Berlin":

1. **Snoots House**
2. **5 South Maple Ave**
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11. 29 North Virginia Ave (Hogan House)
12. 15 South Maryland Ave (Gross House Circa 1840)

Architectural Merit:

The structure's original design was most likely a simple, rustic structure and later enhanced to exhibit a typical 1830's gable front home, most likely to match the neighboring structure(s). This architectural design would have been typical in this area when both the railroad and canal arrived in Berlin in the mid 1830's. The structure is identified in the approved Brunswick Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This 1893 photo is from the archives of the Brunswick Heritage Museum and shows the remains of Old Berlin. The house located at the top right is that of what is now 5 South Maple Avenue.



J.P. Karn's Lumber Building (South Maryland Avenue)

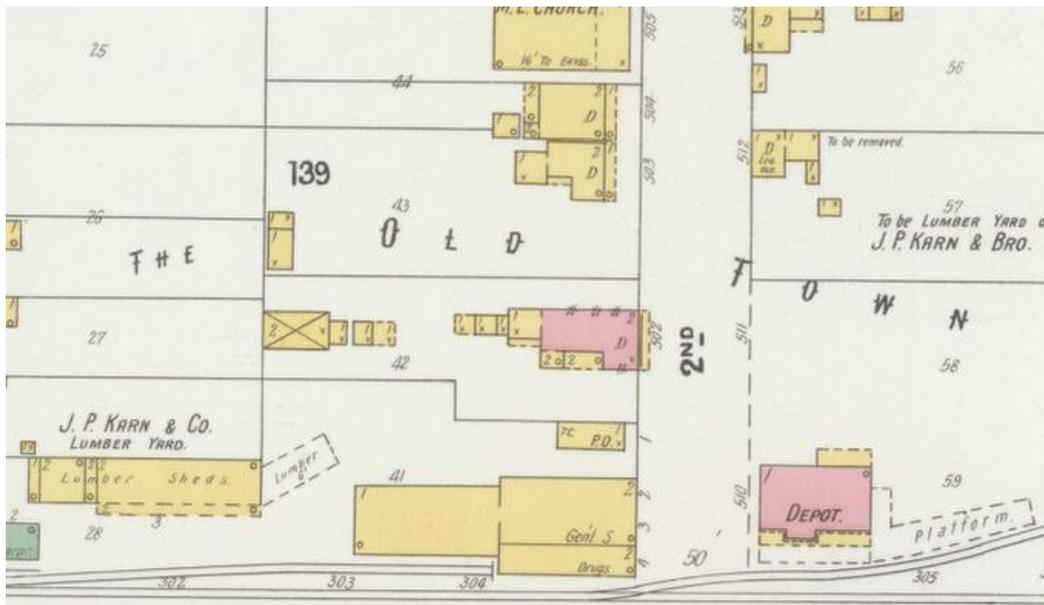
The J.P. Karn Lumber Company building sits on what was originally platted as lot 57 by Leonard Smith in 1787.

Lineage:

The lot was sold to Jacob Long for 5 pounds, 6 pence in a deed recorded in 1791 (WR 10/78) and stipulated that a house needed to be constructed by April 26, 1792 or the lot reverted back to Smith. Long defaulted and the lot was sold to Phillip Hoof of Virginia for a significant increase of 20 pounds, 6 pence suggesting that the lot was improved. Hoof owns the lot until 1851 in which he sells to Henry Leopold (WBT 14/127). Leopold passes circa 1884 and his heirs sell the lot to J S Sigafoose in 1886, retaining ownership as of 1890 when Berlin is renamed to Brunswick. Shortly after 1890, the lot sells to Jeremiah Karn. However, this lot is not the first home of J.P. Karn Lumber Co.

Events or Trends:

The J.P. Karn Lumber building is the last remaining structure from Brunswick that was serviced directly by the B&O Railroad via a spur line that was located in what is now Railroad Square. The Brunswick History Commission states, "Karn received their lumber in box cars on the B&O, unloading by hand and trucking to the storage area. They needed three days to empty a car, and extra help was hired for this work." ⁷The building is a final example of the growth of Brunswick from the village of Berlin into the boomtown that grew because of the railroad's decision to move its main yard here. A boomtown needed lumber and building supplies and J.P. Karn is credited to supplying most of the building materials for Brunswick Construction from the 1890's until the 1920's. At one time J.P. Karn offered a home catalog where they supplied the material and Karn's brother, who was a contractor, built the home. The Sandborn map below is dated to 1899 and shows the pre 1900 location of Karn's to be on South Virginia Avenue. The present day building was built circa 1900 after a Berlin era log cabin was demolished.



⁷BRUNSWICK HISTORY COMMISSION:100 YEARS OF MEMORIES, 1990, PG 120

Architectural Merit:

The J. P. Karn's Lumber Building is a fine example of 1900 construction of a light industrial building as shown in the photo below. Interpreted correctly, the building demonstrates the importance of the B&O Railroad and the growth of the Town of Brunswick. The structure is specifically identified in the approved Brunswick Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Association with individuals who made a demonstrable and lasting contribution:**

When referencing Karn, the Brunswick History Commission states, “Jareemiah P. Karn, born of Dutch extraction in 1857 near Burkittsville, learned carpentry and building from his father and first worked for the C&O Canal Company and B&O Railroad. He later began a contracting company with his brother, William. After working in the District of Columbia, he returned to Brunswick in 1891, then opened a lumber yard with his brother in 1892.”⁸ Karn's Lumber business was mentioned in William's History of Frederick County (1910) as “the largest in the southern section of the county.”

J.P. Karn was also referenced in the book, Portrait and Biographical record of the Sixth Congressional District, Maryland. This publication stated Karn as “one of the leading citizens and businessmen in the town of Brunswick...may be justly called one of the founders of this now thriving place....Our subject purchased the first lot sold in the new corporation (Brunswick) and built the first house upon this property.” “Mr. Karn has been a member of the City Council for six years and has been a member of the School Board.”⁹

⁸ BRUNSWICK HISTORY COMMISSION:100 YEARS OF MEMORIES, 1990, PG 120

⁹ Portrait and Biographical Record of the 6th Congressional District Maryland, Chapman Publishing, 1898, Pg. 265

This photo is from The Brunswick Public Library, Frederick County Public Libraries, Kaplon Photograph Collection, Brunswick Historical Collection. It shows the staff of J.P. Karn's Lumber in the 1940's. The Karn's Building is in the background.



The Area Known as Railroad Square:

The area known as Railroad Square is historic in nature. The area contributes to the History of Native Americans, Berlin, Slavery, the American Civil War, Brunswick, C&O Canal, B&O Railroad, really residents, and early businesses. All of these facts demonstrate the area contributes to the Historic District of Brunswick. All development in this area should at a minimum require an archeological study for cultural artifacts, and the rehabilitation/restoration of the three properties listed in this report.

Author Biography:

James R. Castle was born and raised in the Brunswick/Knoxville area of Frederick County, Maryland. Instead of television or radio, James entertained and educated himself by listening to the stories of his family members and of the elders of his community. Weekends would find James looking for arrow points along a river or digging for bottles from old abandoned dump sites.

James currently resides in Brunswick, MD with his wife Monica. He metal detects, researches, writes and investigates the paranormal. Known as a source on Brunswick area history, James conducts much research on families and properties in the area. He assists the local government with historical research and often contributes to a local weekly newspaper, The Brunswick Citizen. He published his first book, *History In Our Attics: Photos and Documents of Brunswick, Maryland* in 2014. Volume II was published in 2015 and Volume III was published in 2018. *A Christmas Trip to Brunswick* was published in 2016.

James currently serves as President of the Brunswick Potomac Foundation, operators of the Brunswick Heritage Museum. In 2015, his efforts to preserve Brunswick history earned him to be named “Tourism Ambassador of the Year” by the Frederick County Tourism Council. The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented Castle with a Historic Preservation Recognition award in 2016.