INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY/DISTRICT
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property/District Name: Bladensburg Dueling Grounds  Survey Number: PG68-14

Tax Parcel#: __________________________

Project: US Alt 1 (Bladensburg Rd) Planning Study from D.C. Line to 40th Ave  Agency: MDOT-SHA

Site visit by MHT Staff: __no__ __yes__ Name ______________ Date __________

Eligibility recommended  __X__  Eligibility not recommended __________

Criteria:  __X__ A  __B__  __C__  __D__  Considerations:  __A__  __B__  __C__  __D__  __E__  __F__  __G__  None

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

The Bladensburg Dueling Grounds (PG68-14), located on Oak Street near Bladensburg Road, are eligible due to the fact that the site meets National Register Criterion A. Preliminary research has not revealed any association between the site and the lives of persons significant in our past (Criterion B). The grounds do not represent the work of a master or display high artistic merit (Criterion C). Nor are they likely to yield information important in history or prehistory (Criterion D). The property does, however, reveal an association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (Criterion A). Thus, the Bladensburg Dueling Grounds are National Register-eligible.

The Bladensburg Dueling Grounds were the site of more than 50 duels fought during the 1800s. The most famous duel fought there took place between Commodores Stephen Decatur and James Barron in 1820. The notoriety of the site led Congress to outlaw dueling in 1839, although duels continued to be fought on these grounds until the Civil War period.

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: Maryland Historical Trust Inventory Form

and US Alt 1 (Bladensburg Rd) from D.C. Line to 40th Ave Planning Study Summary of Results

Prepared by: Traceries, 5420 Western Ave., Chevy Chase, MD 20815  January 1998

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services  3/1/98

Date

NR program concurrence:  __X__ yes  __no__  not applicable

Reviewer, NR Program  8/24/98

Date
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITES SUMMARY SHEET

P.G. County Survey # 68-14 Date 19th century

Name Bladensburg Dueling Grounds
Location Rte.#1 at Bladensburg Ave., Bladensburg, Md.

Open to Public _x_ yes ___ no

This is a grassy park area, the site of many duels during the
nineteenth century. It was part of the tract Chittam Castle Manor
(later known as Chillum) patented in 1763 by William Digges. It
remained in the Digges family until 1845.

Research has established at least 26 recorded duels at the
Bladensburg grounds, although tradition increases the count to 50.
Some of the more famous include the following. In December 1809,
General John Jackson, Congressman from Virginia and brother-in-
law of Mrs. Dolley Madison, got into an apolitical dispute with
Joseph Pearson, Congressman from North Carolina. Jackson was
seriously wounded, and recuperated at the nearby home of Mrs.
Digges where he was visited by President and Mrs. Madison. Pro-
bably the most famous duel occurred in 1820 when Commodores James
Barron and Stephen Decatur settled a long-standing feud at the
Bladensburg dueling grounds. Decatur received a mortal wound and
died soon afterwards at his house on Lafayette Square.

The movement against dueling reached a peak in 1838 after the
duel between Congressmen Jonathan Cilley of Maine and William Graves
of Kentucky. Cilley, who was a friend of author Nathaniel Haw-
thorne, was killed in the duel, and Hawthorne wrote a memorial to
Cilley in the Democratic Review. Reaction to the Graves-Cilley duel
led to increasing pressure to outlaw the practice of dueling. In
theory, dueling had always been illegal in the United States, and
after the Civil War the practice died out fully.
**NAME**

**Bladensburg Dueling Grounds**

**LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER**

Rte. #1 at Bladensburg Avenue, between 37th Pl. & 38th Avenue

**CITY, TOWN**

Bladensburg

**STATE**

Maryland

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT**

5th

**COUNTY**

P.G.

**CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_DISTRICT</td>
<td>_PUBLIC</td>
<td>_OCCUPIED</td>
<td>_AGRICULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_BUILDING(S)</td>
<td>_PRIVATE</td>
<td>_UNOCCUPIED</td>
<td>_COMMERCIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_STRUCTURE</td>
<td>_BOTH</td>
<td>_WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
<td>_EDUCATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X _SITE</td>
<td>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</td>
<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td>_PRIVATE RESIDENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_OBJECT</td>
<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td>X YES: RESTRICTED</td>
<td>_ENTERTAINMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>_YES: UNRESTRICTED</td>
<td>_RELIGIOUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_NO</td>
<td>_GOVERNMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_SCIENTIFIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_INDUSTRIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_TRANSPORTATION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | | | _OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**NAME**

Md. National Capital Park & Planning

**Telephone #: 277-2200**

**STREET & NUMBER**

Kenilworth Ave.

**CITY, TOWN**

Riverdale

**STATE, ZIP CODE**

Maryland

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**

P.G. County Courthouse

**STREET & NUMBER**

Main Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Upper Marlboro

**STATE**

Maryland

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE**

P.G. Historic Sites Inventory

**DATE**

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

Surratt House 9110 Brandywine Road

**CITY, TOWN**

Clinton

**STATE**

Maryland
This is a grassy park area, the site of many historic nineteenth century duels.

Graves of Kentucky. Gilley, who was a friend of author Nathaniel Hawthorne, was killed in the duel, and Hawthorne wrote a memorial to Gilley in the Democratic Review. Reaction to the Graves-Gilley duel led to increasing pressure to outlaw the practice of dueling. In theory, dueling had always been illegal in the United States, and after the Civil War the practice died out fully.
This was the site of numerous duels during the nineteenth century. It was part of the tract Chittam Castle Manor (later known as Chillum) patented in 1763 by William Digges. It remained in the Digges family until 1845.

Research has established at least 26 recorded duels at the Bladensburg grounds, although tradition increases the count to 50. The first recorded duel took place in 1808 between Congressman Gardenier (N.Y.) and Campbell (Tenn.). Gardenier was wounded, but recovered. The last is believed to have occurred in 1868 between General Lawrence, U.S. Minister to Costa Rica, and Baron Kusserow, Secretary of the German legation, in which a reconciliation was effected.

Between these dates occurred a long list of duels between prominent men. Some of the more famous include the following. In December 1809, General John G. Jackson, Congressman from Virginia and brother-in-law of Mrs. Dolley Madison, got into a political dispute with Joseph Pearson, Congressman from North Carolina. Jackson was seriously wounded, and recuperated at the nearby home of Mrs. Digges where he was visited by President and Mrs. Madison. Probably the most famous duel occurred in 1820 when Commodores James Barron and Stephen Decatur settled a longstanding feud at the Bladensburg dueling grounds. Decatur received a mortal wound and died soon afterwards at his house on Lafayette Square.

The movement against dueling reached a peak in 1838 after the duel between Congressmen Jonathan Gilley of Maine and William (continued on facing page)
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES
Deeds #891/452; #591/67.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME / TITLE
Shirley Baltz/Susan Pearl

ORGANIZATION
P.G. Historical & Cultural Trust

DATE
May 1979

STREET & NUMBER
9110 Brandywine Road

TELEPHONE
5,992-6,776

CITY OR TOWN
Clinton, Md.

STATE
20735

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

NAME

HISTORIC
Dueling Grounds
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Oak Street, near Bladensburg Rd.

CITY, TOWN
Colmar Manor
VICINITY OF

STATE
Maryland
COUNTY
Prince George's

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT
BUILDING(S)
STRUCTURE
SITE
OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE
BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION

STATUS
OCUPIED
UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
YES RESTRICTED
YES UNRESTRICTED
NO

PRESENT USE
AGRICULTURE
COMMERCIAL
PARK
EDUCATIONAL
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
ENTERTAINMENT
RELIGIOUS
GOVERNMENT
SCIENTIFIC
INDUSTRIAL
TRANSPORTATION
MILITARY
OTHER

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning

STREET & NUMBER
6600 Kenilworth Ave.

CITY, TOWN
Riverdale
VICINITY OF

STATE, ZIP CODE
Maryland

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
Prince George's County Courthouse

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Upper Marlboro
STATE
Maryland

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE
This is a small, 3 acre park-located in a ravine just off Bladensburg Rd. It is at the head of a small creek that flows into the Anacostia River. An historic marker was placed here by the Parks Department, in a ceremony held Jan. 13, 1955. An asphalt basketball court sits in the middle of the park.
**SIGNIFICANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREHISTORIC</td>
<td>ARCHEOLOGY: PREHISTORIC COMMUNITY PLANNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400-1499</td>
<td>ARCHEOLOGY: HISTORIC CONSERVATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500-1599</td>
<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600-1699</td>
<td>ARCHITECTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700-1799</td>
<td>ART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1899</td>
<td>COMMERCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-</td>
<td>COMMUNICATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INVENTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RELIGION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LAW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LITERATURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCIENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECONOMICS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MILITARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ENGINEERING .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHILOSOPHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THEATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INDUSTRY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MUSIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POLITICS/GOVERNMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OTHER (SPECIFY)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SPECIFIC DATES**

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

This was a notorious dueling grounds, where more than 50 duels were fought during the early 1800's. The most famous took place between Commodores Stephen Decatur and James Barron in 1820. Decatur was fatally wounded in that encounter. The site was one that led Congress to outlaw dueling in 1839, although duels continued here up until the Civil War period.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

3) Interesting source is HARPER'S MAGAZINE, March, 1858.
CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES
STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME/TITLE
Michael F. Dwyer, Senior Park Historian
ORGANIZATION
M-NCPPC
STREET & NUMBER
8787 Georgia Ave.
CITY OR TOWN
Silver Spring
STATE
Maryland
DATE
3/2/73
TELEPHONE
589-1480

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438
DUELING GROUNDS
(68-14)

FORT
LINCOLN
CEMETERY

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

PG:68-14
Dueling Grounds

On this site, now part of Anacostia River Park, more than 50 duels were fought during the first half of the 19th century. Here, on what became known as "the dark and bloody grounds," gentlemen of Washington settled their political and personal differences. One of the most famous disputes was that between Commodores Stephen Decatur and James Barron, which was settled here on March 22, 1820. Commodore Decatur, who had gained fame as the conqueror of the Barbary pirates, was fatally wounded by his antagonist. Although Congress passed an anti-dueling law in 1839, duels continued here until just before the Civil War.

The Maryland-National Capital Park
And Planning Commission
NAME DUELING GROUNDS
LOCATION BLADENSBURG, MD., RT. 1 & OAK ST.
FACADE
PHOTO TAKEN 3/2/73 M Dwyer
NAME  DUELING GROUNDS - MNCPPC PARK
LOCATION  OAK ST, NEAR RT 1  BLADENSBURG MD
FACADE  LOOKING SW
PHOTO TAKEN  3/2/73  M Dwyer