

## Huntington/Bowie (71B-002)

The incorporated City of Bowie is located in the northeastern portion of Prince George's County, approximately 12 miles northeast of Washington, D.C. Within the sprawling City of Bowie is an historic core comprised of the small railroad community originally known as Huntington City. This community was situated at the junction of the main line of the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad and its spur line into Washington, D.C.

Much of Bowie is part of the early-eighteenth-century estate known as Catton, which was owned by Robert Carville of St. Mary's City. By 1719, the property was purchased by Jacob Henderson, rector of Queen Anne's Parish, who renamed the area "Belair." Samuel Ogle, and his future son-in-law Benjamin Tasker (Senior), purchased the 2,500-acre estate in 1737 and constructed the Belair Mansion, which remained in the family until 1871.<sup>1</sup> The site of Huntington was located five miles northwest of the Belair Mansion. Martenet's map of 1861 documents the area as a rural community with small farms scattered across the landscape.<sup>2</sup>

During the mid-nineteenth century, this rural region lacked direct transportation to the lucrative markets of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. In 1853, a state charter was granted to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company, with Oden Bowie as its president.<sup>3</sup> Bowie, who was born at Fairview, near the Belair estate, had fought in the Mexican War (1846-1848) and served in the Maryland House of Delegates and the Maryland State Senate. Plans to construct the railroad line were stalled by the Civil War (1861-1865); construction finally began in 1868, sparking suburban development plans.<sup>4</sup>

In 1869, Ben M. Plumb, a developer and speculator from Washington, D.C., and his associates purchased a 300-acre farm from Henry Carrick at the future juncture of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad and the spur line to Washington, D.C.<sup>5</sup> In 1870, he platted Huntington City on a rectilinear grid that was bisected by the railroad tracks. The tract was laid out with streets named after trees running north and south, and numbered streets running east and west.<sup>6</sup> The 2,500 square-foot lots were offered for sale at \$25 each. Purchases of the lots began almost immediately with some of the earliest buildings constructed by the railroad company.<sup>7</sup> The first train passed through Huntington in 1872 and a train station was constructed later that year. The station was named Bowie for Oden Bowie, president of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad.<sup>8</sup>

As the community grew, residents became interested in incorporation, and in March 1874 the Maryland General Assembly granted a charter to the Commissioners of Huntington and established the Town of Huntington. In 1882, the town commissioners changed the name of the town to Bowie, in honor of

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<sup>1</sup> George D. Denny, Jr., *Proud Past, Promising Future: Cities and Towns in Prince George's County, Maryland* (Brentwood, MD: Tuxedo Press, 1997), 71-73.

<sup>2</sup> Simon J. Martenet, "Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1861, Adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland" (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861) and G.M. Hopkins, "Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland" (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

<sup>3</sup> Sally Cannon Hein, "Bowie Railroad Buildings," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (March, 1997), 8:11.

<sup>4</sup> Denny, *Proud Past*, 73.

<sup>5</sup> Denny, *Proud Past*, 74.

<sup>6</sup> Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Drawer 11, File 29.

<sup>7</sup> Hein, "Bowie Railroad Buildings," 8:12.

<sup>8</sup> Susan G. Pearl, "Huntington Historic Survey Area," Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, revised 1996, 8:3.

Governor Oden Bowie, whose efforts helped establish the railroad in Prince George's County. The Town of Huntington was officially renamed Bowie in 1916 by the Maryland General Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

Because of the proximity to the railroad, the community continued to grow and develop. By 1880, there were over sixty families living in Huntington. The railroad was the largest employer of town residents; there were two conductors, two engineers, a baggage master, and brakeman. The town also had a postmaster, four merchants, four carpenters, a schoolteacher, telegraph operator, hotel keeper, two shoe makers, a butcher, barber, and clockmaker.<sup>10</sup> The community included several hotels and saloons and had a sizable, racially mixed population of professionals, craftsmen, and laborers.<sup>11</sup> White children in the community attended the Cedar Grove School, located north of town. In 1881, a two-story, two-room schoolhouse was built on Chestnut Avenue near 13th Street. African-American children went to Horsepen Hill School, which was constructed in 1877 just east of the community.<sup>12</sup> This school was replaced in 1927 with a two-room school on 10th Street.<sup>13</sup>

As in much of Prince George's County, development during World War II (1941-1945) was slow, but picked up significantly after the war. In 1956, William J. Levitt, president of Levitt and Sons, purchased the Belair estate for \$1.75 million. His plan was to develop a 2,200-acre community, the largest ever attempted in Prince George's County. Levitt had already constructed several large-scale communities in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; his best-known development was Levittown in Nassau County (Long Island), New York. Levitt began to lobby the Town of Bowie to annex his development surrounding the Belair mansion. This occurred in 1959, when a lease to use the Levitt's privately constructed sewer and water facilities was granted to the town in return for the annexation. In 1963, the town of Bowie became the City of Bowie.<sup>14</sup> The large expansion of Bowie at this time divided the city into named sections, and thus the original railroad town became known as the Huntington section of Bowie.<sup>15</sup>

Levitt and others continued to construct new subdivisions in the Bowie area. During the initial flurry of development in the mid-twentieth century, Huntington remained a quiet town with minimal infill constructed from the 1950s to the 1970s. In the 1990s, the City of Bowie purchased the remaining railroad buildings from AMTRAK, moved them to their present site in the Huntington area, and rehabilitated the buildings for use as a museum.<sup>16</sup> Suburban growth began to expand into the Huntington area in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century with resubdivision of undeveloped portions of the original Huntington plat. This development, located on the edges of the community, includes the subdivisions of Dontrine, Adnell Woods, and Hunt Valley.

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<sup>9</sup> Denny, *Proud Past*, 75-77.

<sup>10</sup> Sally Cannon Hein, "Bowie Railroad Buildings," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (March, 1997), 8:12.

<sup>11</sup> Howard S. Berger, "Railroad Communities in Prince George's County, 1870-1940," in *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County: Short Papers on Settlement Patterns, Transportation and Cultural History* (Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1991), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Denny, *Proud Past*, 75.

<sup>13</sup> Susan G. Pearl, "Huntington Historic Survey Area, PG: 71B-2," Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, revised 1996, 8:4.

<sup>14</sup> Denny, *Proud Past*, 74.

<sup>15</sup> Historic Old Town Bowie, Maryland, "About Us," <http://www.oldtownbowie.com/aboutus.html>, accessed 28 January 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Denny, *Proud Past*, 82.

Today, the City of Bowie encompasses sixteen square miles of residential development, shopping and office centers, as well as many educational, recreational, and cultural facilities. In 2000, Bowie was one of the fastest growing municipalities in Prince George's County, only behind Eagle Harbor and Morningside. The community has over 55,000 residents, of which only a small portion reside in the Huntington section.<sup>17</sup>

There are six designated Prince George's County Historic Sites in the Huntington section of Bowie:

- PG: 71B-002-01, Straining House, 13005 7th Street
- PG: 71B-002-03, Ryon House, 13125 11th Street
- PG: 71B-002-05, St. James Episcopal Church, 13010 8th Street
- PG: 71B-002-08, Harmon-Phelps House, 8706 Maple Avenue
- PG: 71B-002-09, Bowie Railroad Buildings (NR), 8614 Chestnut Avenue
- PG: 71B-002-023, Knights of St. John Meeting House, 13004 12th Street

## **Windshield Survey**

A windshield survey of the Huntington section of Bowie was completed in February 2008. The survey area was expanded to include the most developed areas within Huntington as originally platted. The survey area consists of approximately 590 primary resources. The community is predominately residential with a significant concentration of historic commercial buildings. Commercial development is scattered throughout the community, with the largest concentration along 9th Street. Public buildings include a fire station, community center, and a museum. Several churches and meeting halls are also located in Huntington. Buildings range in age from ca. 1880 to the present. Common building forms include I-houses, front-gabled buildings, L-shaped plans, bungalows, American Foursquares, Cape Cods, and split-foyers. Architectural styles in Huntington include vernacular interpretations of the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Dutch Colonial Revival. There are also later, albeit limited, influences of the Modern Movement in Huntington. The majority of residential buildings are wood-frame construction, although there are masonry buildings including some of rock-faced concrete block. The community is relatively flat with gently rolling hills. The wooded areas that once surrounded the undeveloped portions of the Huntington plat are now being improved with late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century houses. Setbacks of the buildings vary. The original section of Huntington was platted on a rectilinear grid. Later subdivisions have curvilinear streets.

## **Historic District Evaluation**

Huntington represents several Prince George's County Heritage Themes, including transportation, commerce, suburban growth, and residential architectural styles. Despite the community's historic significance, Huntington is not recommended as eligible for listing as either a National Register historic district or as a Prince George's County historic district. Initial development in Huntington occurred in the late nineteenth century, in large part due to the nearby railroad. After 1900, the community gradually evolved with sporadic development in the 1920s, 1930s, and again in the 1950s. Development lulled through much of the third quarter of the twentieth century. Beginning in the late twentieth century, new suburban development has encroached on the historic community. Although the community is significant

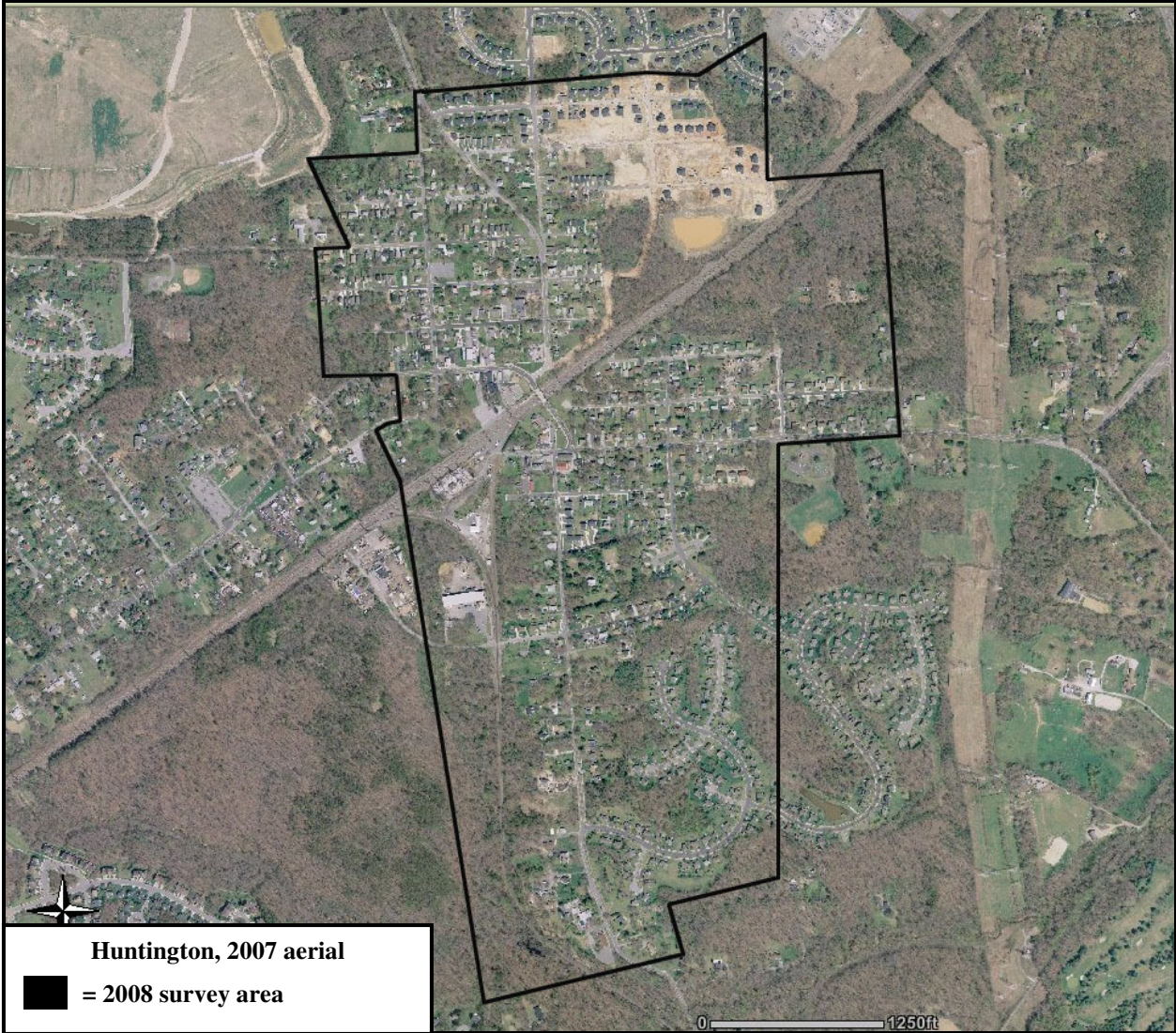
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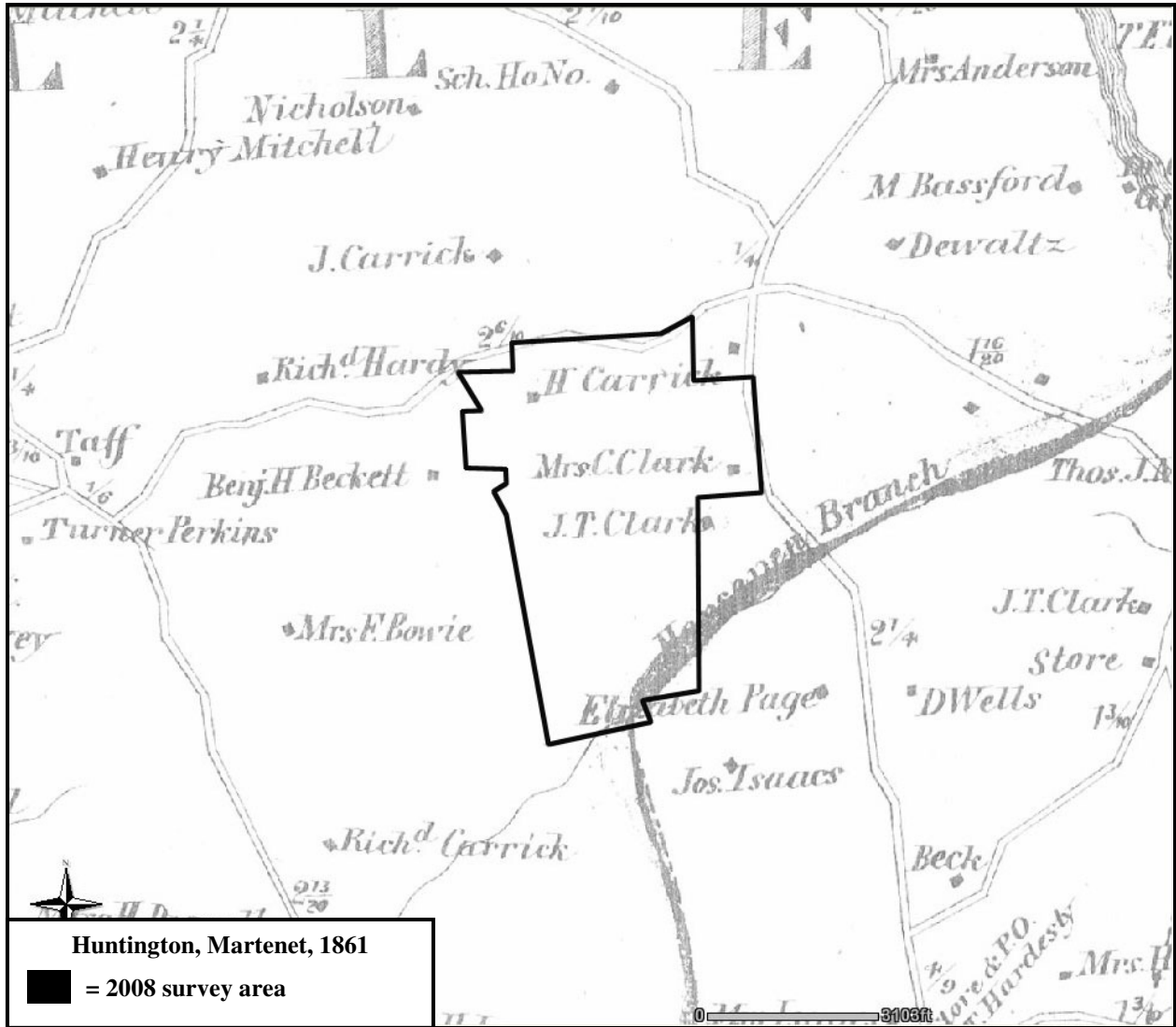
<sup>17</sup> City of Bowie, Department of Planning and Economic Development, "City of Bowie Community Profile" (Bowie, MD: City of Bowie, 2006), [http://www.cityofbowie.org/Planning/Community\\_Profile.pdf](http://www.cityofbowie.org/Planning/Community_Profile.pdf), accessed 25 January 2009.

as an early-twentieth-century railroad suburb, there are not enough buildings remaining to document the community's early historic context. Twentieth-century infill and the development of new subdivisions have further affected the integrity of the community. Reducing the boundaries and focusing on a smaller portion of Huntington still presents issues of integrity. Several buildings in Huntington were lost to two fires that devastated the community in 1895 and 1910. Further, many of the earliest buildings in Huntington, particularly the commercial buildings, have been altered with modern replacement materials and additions, significantly compromising their integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Huntington still retains several historic railroad buildings (which were moved to their location and now used as a museum), but the loss of the railroad as both an employer and transportation source takes away an integral part of the community's history. Overall, Huntington has lost its integrity of design, setting, feeling, and association.

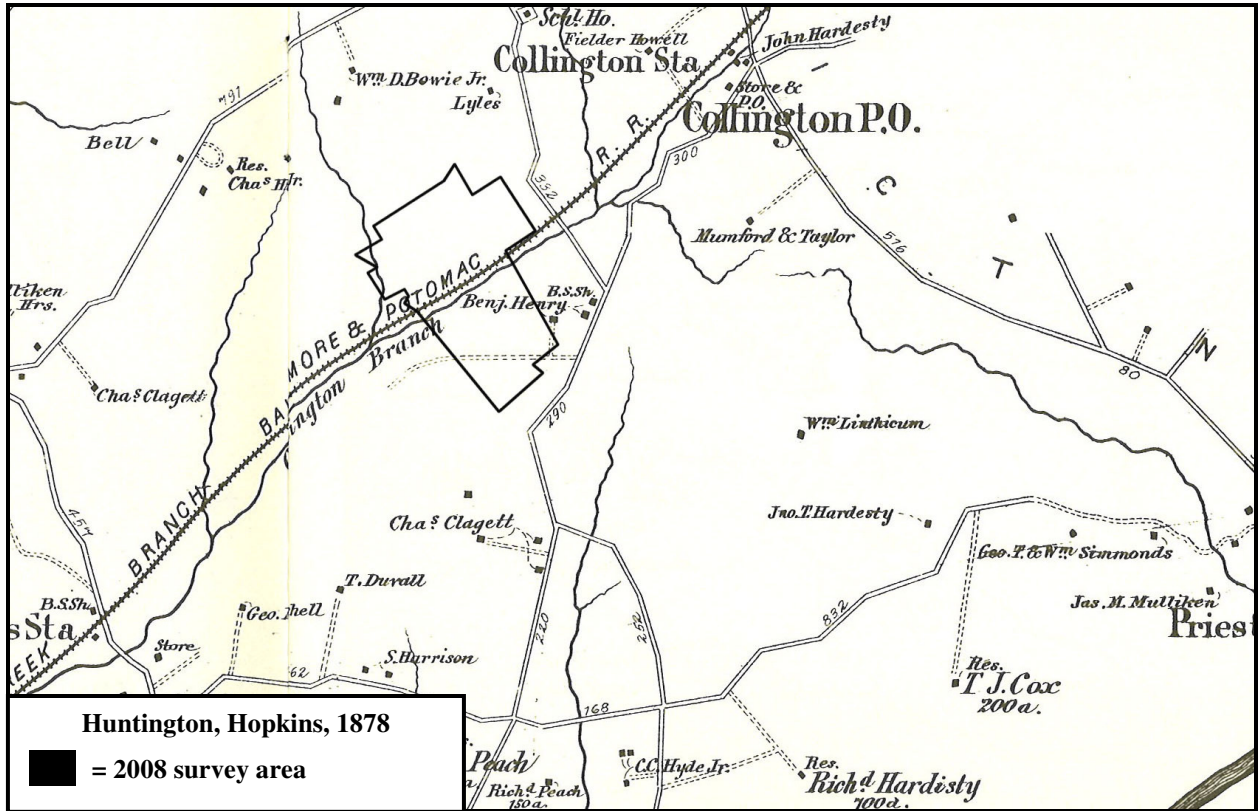
Prepared by EHT Tracerics, Inc.  
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Looking northwest, 12906-12900 10th Street, William Luers House (PG: 71B-002-14) (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)





Looking north, 8718-9720-8722-8724 Maple Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking northeast, Bowie Methodist Church, 8807- 8811 Maple Avenue (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)





Looking northeast, 1300 block (even) of 3rd Street, Adnell Woods (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking east, 8001 Chestnut Avenue (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)





Looking northeast, Huntington Community Center, 13022 8th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)





Looking northwest, 13000 block (even) 9th Street (*EHT Tracerics, 2008*)



Looking southwest, 13000 block (odd) 9th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)





Looking northwest, St. James Episcopal Church (PG: 71B-002-05), 13010 8th Street (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)



Looking northwest, Bowie Railroad Buildings (PG: 71B-002-09, NR), 8614 Chestnut Avenue  
(*EHT Traceries*, 2008)





Looking northeast, 13024 11th Street (*EHT Tracerics, 2008*)





Looking northeast, Joffe Store (PG: 71B-002-04), 8519-8521 Chestnut Avenue (*EHT Tracerics, 2008*)



Looking northwest, Knights of St. John Hall (PG: 71B-002-0023), 13004 12th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)





Looking northeast, 8501-8505 11th Street (*EHT Traceries, 2008*)





Looking southwest, Ryon House (PG: 71B-002-03), 13125 11th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)





Looking east, 8131 Chestnut Avenue (*EHT Tracerics, 2008*)





Looking northwest, 8310 Chestnut Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)



Looking northwest, 8412 Chestnut Avenue (*EHT Traceries*, 2008)