

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 17 1986

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Hyattsville Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Main Post Office

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

4325 Gallatin Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Hyattsville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF  
CODE

Fifth

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Prince George's

CODE

033

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- N/A  BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*

Field Real Estate and Buildings Office - U.S. Postal Service

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 701

CITY, TOWN

Columbia

STATE

Maryland

— VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Land Records Department, Prince George's County

STREET & NUMBER

14735 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Upper Marlboro

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory - PG: 68-9

DATE

February 1980

— FEDERAL  STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

CITY, TOWN

Annapolis

STATE

Maryland

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

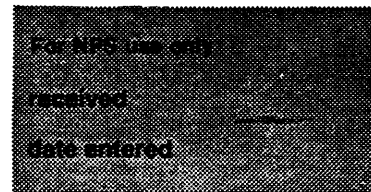
The Hyattsville Post Office is a one-story brick building constructed over a full basement. The building is rectangular in plan and faces north onto Gallatin Street. The Post Office consists of a central, three-bay block flanked by smaller one bay pavilions. The central block has a pitched, slate roof with brick gable ends terminating in stylized chimneys; the pavilions have flat roofs. A frame cupola crowns the center of the pitched roof. The entrance to the building is located at the center of the Gallatin Street facade.

The walls are detailed in Flemish bond brick with flush mortar. The building rests on a masonry watertable. Stylized limestone quoins articulate the corners of the central block and the pavilions. There are three round-arched openings in the central block and single rectangular openings in each of the pavilions. The arch surrounding the entrance is detailed in limestone and features a molded keystone and shallow impost blocks. Arches above the windows of the central pavilion are composed of headers with simple limestone impost blocks and keystones. The rectangular windows are topped by brick jack arches. Single panels are set within the wall above each rectangular opening. A limestone cornice with modillion blocks projects above a frieze on the central block. "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" is incised within the frieze. The pavilions are surmounted by a narrow, flush cornice. Five granite steps with a simple wrought iron rail lead from the sidewalk to the entrance. Decorative wrought and cast iron coach lamps project from the building at either side of the entrance.

The entrance features a fanlight transom above panelled and glazed doors. Interlaces decorate the head above the six-light transom. An entablature with a fluted frieze extends below the transom. "HYATTSVILLE MD" is incised within a recessed panel above the doors. The rectangular windows are composed of nine-over-six sash; the round arched windows of eighteen-over-eight sash.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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The interior of the Post Office consists of a public lobby at the front of the building with the work room and ancillary spaces located at the rear and in the basement. The Postmaster's office, located in the northwest corner, opens both into the lobby and the workroom. A glazed vestibule projects from the entrance into the lobby. The vestibule features Colonial revival detailing such as raised panels and pilasters. The rectangular lobby displays marble wainscot and baseboards. The door surround framing the lobby door to the Postmaster's Office is articulated with pilasters and a full entablature. Six murals by Eugene Kingman decorate the lobby. The murals refer to the agricultural heritage of Prince George's County. A cornstalk border below each mural ties their composition together. The murals consist of vignettes depicting horses grazing behind a fence, a rural church, frame structures along water with masts of sailboats visible in the background, ploughed fields, and fields being worked. Rural delivery mail boxes embellish the foreground of several of the murals.

Alterations have had little effect on the architectural character of the building. The loading dock at the rear of the building has been enlarged and some changes have been made to finishes within the interior. The floor plan remains essentially the same. The lobby retains a remarkable degree of integrity. The only changes there consist of a rough ashlar stone planter installed in the northeast portion and overhead fixtures that are not original to the building. (The present Saturn globes, retrieved from the Upper Marlboro Post Office, are said to resemble the original ones.)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1935

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Louis A. Simon, Supervising Arch.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hyattsville Post Office, built in 1935, is one of the most architecturally distinguished 20th century buildings in Hyattsville. An excellent example of Colonial Revival architecture, the Hyattsville Post Office reflects the attention Hyattsville resident and Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Smith W. Purdum paid to its construction. Prior to the opening of the Prince George's County Postal Facility in 1970, the Hyattsville Post Office functioned as the center of mail distribution for the rapidly growing southern portion of Prince George's County. The Hyattsville Post Office meets Criterion C ("embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a type...possesses high artistic values") because of its handsome adaptation of Colonial precedents. In the future, the building may also meet Criterion B ("associated with the lives of persons significant in our past") as the passage of time permits objective evaluation of long-time postmaster Egbert F. Tingley and mural artist Eugene Kingman.

### HISTORY

The Hyattsville Post Office is an excellent example of Colonial revival architecture that gains additional significance through its local context. Typical of Maryland post offices designed by the Office of Supervising Architect of the Treasury, the Hyattsville Post Office relies on American Georgian precedents for its massing and ornamental vocabulary. Its modest size and scale is well suited to Colonial revival treatment. The national connotations of this style and its link with Maryland architectural tradition are especially appropriate for a civic building of this type.

The Hyattsville Post Office, while similar to other post offices throughout Maryland, is an unusually effective adaptation of Colonial revival. The proportions and massing of the building are exceptionally handsome. Unlike many post offices of this period which have five continuous bays, the proportions of the three bay facade of the central block function well with the building's height and cupola. The use of a central block with flanking

(See Continuation Sheets)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 145 ft. x 145 ft. or .482 acres

UTM REFERENCES Washington East Quadrangle, D.C. - Maryland; scale 1:24000

A	1 8	3 3 17 7 0	4 3 1 3 1 1 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 26, 27, and 28, Block "B" in Wine and Johnson's 2nd Addition to Hyattsville

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Betty Bird  
ORGANIZATION

October 27, 1985  
DATE

STREET & NUMBER

2025 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 801  
CITY OR TOWN

TELEPHONE

202-463-2033  
STATE

Washington, D.C. 20006

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

*[Signature]*  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is  National  State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Realty Specialist, Senior

DATE

6-6-86

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*[Signature]*  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

7/21/86

TEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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pavilions recalls disposition characteristic of the Maryland and Virginia Tidewater. This massing creates a harmonious relationship between the cupola and the central block and highlights the gable ends. The quoins add further emphasis to the handsome composition. (Correspondence during the building's construction reveals dissatisfaction with the appearance of skylights, now gone, from above the flat roof. This may explain why subsequent post offices utilized a continuous five bay facade topped by a single, pitched roof.)

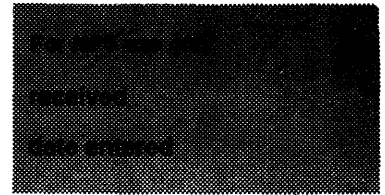
The architectural quality of the Hyattsville Post Office may be attributed to Hyattsville resident Smith W. Purdum's position as Fourth Assistant Postmaster General in charge of the Division of Engineering and Research. His residence was on Gallatin Street about four blocks from the Post Office. (Interview with Francis X. Geary.) Correspondence shows that Purdum himself devoted attention to the construction of the building as well as to the design and execution of the murals. (Record Group 121, Item 31.)

Within the context of other early 20th century buildings in Hyattsville, the Post Office is outstanding. Hyattsville possesses architecturally significant residential neighborhoods encompassing a variety of late 19th and early 20th century styles. Its commercial and civic architecture from this period is, however, far more modest and consists primarily of vernacular structures with party walls having little architectural pretension. These buildings form a backdrop for Hyattsville's few noteworthy free-standing institutional structures like the National Guard Armory, the Post Office, and the County Service Building. The quality of its design and detailing makes the Post Office one of the most architecturally distinguished of these buildings.

The building constructed in 1935 is the sixth structure to house the Hyattsville Post Office. William P. Magruder owned the vacant land on which the Hyattsville Post Office was built. A.H. Seidenspinner, College Heights Estates realtor, negotiated the sale of the property for \$7,500. ("I Believe in America," pp. 6, 21-22.) Architectural drawings show that site surveys had commenced by October 1934. By January 31, 1935 the construction contract had been signed and work began on March 18 of that year. Postmaster General James A. Farley laid the cornerstone on June 19, 1935. Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Smith W. Purdum, both Maryland senators, and 200 other dignitaries were also on hand. Blauner Construction Company of Chicago built the second-class postal facility at a cost of \$76,000. James N. Pfeiffer and C. Tarrant were among the stonemasons; James T. Haggett was one of the bricklayers. (*Washington Post*, June 20, 1935, p.

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12; Record Group 121.) Suppliers for the building included the following:

Marble wainscot & baseboards	Gray Knox Marble Co., Knoxville
Exterior light fixtures	Michaels Art Bronze Co.
Limestone	Indian Hill Stone Co., Bloomington
Brick	United Clay Products, D.C.
Granite	Frank Peach, Granite, Md.
Terrazzo	Standard Art Marble & Tile, D.C.
Landscaping	Hyattsville Nursery.

The building was occupied on October 19, 1935. (Record Group 121, "Hyattsville Post Office Records Town's History," **Prince George's Sentinel**, March 20, 1969, p. 16.)

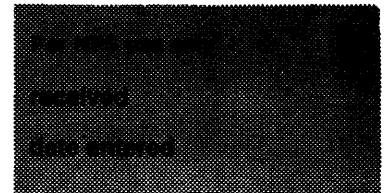
The Hyattsville Post Office was designed under the authority of Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury. Names appearing on the architectural drawings for the building include F.H. McCrary, A.W. Clark, Spittel, Flanagan, Santelmann, Moore, Swasey, and Boyer. F.H. McCrary checked most of the drawings which are dated December 1934. Caleb C. Motz supervised construction for the Treasury.

Correspondence indicates the commission for murals within the building proved problematic. Initially there was to be only a single mural over the Postmaster's door. Mervin Jules of Baltimore evidently won a competition but his actual design did not match the promise of his initial sketch. At the suggestion of the Hyattsville mayor and postmaster, Jules' scheme featured a postal theme. In a letter to Edward B. Rowan, Superintendent of the Painting and Sculpture Section, Jules wrote, "In speaking with these people I learned that the town is largely residential having no industries whatsoever. Also that they were not at all enthusiastic about the idea of using local history as the subject matter." (Record Group 121, Item 133.) Jules balked at redesign demanded by Rowan, begging off the commission.

The present murals were painted by Eugene Kingman in December 1937. The contract indicates that the medium was tempura on gesso and that the murals were commissioned for \$1390. Ballard Jamieson assisted in the installation. Kingman was approached on the basis of his entry to a competition for the Justice Department. Early in the discussions with Kingman the number of murals was increased and the concept of using a frieze to unify the murals was put forward. Rowan recommended scenes of Hyattsville countryside as the subject matter. "In view of the fact that this is the home of the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General {Smith Purdum} who is an enthusiast about horses I hope that your subject matter will be able to include

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some horses in the design." (Rowan to Kingman, November 5, 1936.) Rowan's suggestion may have been an attempt to atone to Purdum for the Treasury Department's earlier refusal of Purdum's request to substitute a trotting horse for the arrow on the weather vane. (Purdum to Procurement Division, February 14, 1935.)

Smith Purdum proposed that Mrs. J. Enos Ray of Hyattsville, a civic leader and member of the Prince George's County School Board, advise Kingman on the murals. Mrs. Ray was instrumental in increasing the number of murals and drove Kingman around "to visit some old houses that I can use in the designs." (Kingman to Rowan, April 15, 1937.) The horses appear to be the most closely scrutinized aspect of the murals. "...the introduction of either a black, piebald or dappled horse might make for color variety and interest." (Rowan to Kingman, March 8, 1937.) Purdum, who personally approved the murals, indicated that the lowered ear of the foremost horse should be raised.

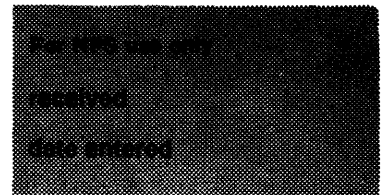
Kingman's reputation as a scenic painter made him an obvious choice for murals depicting rural countryside. Born in 1909, Kingman graduated from Yale University in 1932 and the Yale School of Fine Arts in 1935. A native of Providence, he taught at the Rhode Island School of Design and later at the University of Omaha. His work was widely exhibited and received much contemporary acclaim. Early in his career both the National Park Service and the Carnegie Institute commissioned paintings depicting Glacier National Park and Crater Lake National Park several of which were later published in **National Geographic**. Kingman later served as director of the Philbrook Art Center and director of exhibitions for Texas. Other mural commissions include the Kemmarrer, Wyoming Post Office, the East Providence, Rhode Island Post Office, and the New York Times Building Lobby. (Record Group 121, Item 133; Spencer Hines, Information Sheet on Hyattsville Post Office Murals.)

The Hyattsville Post Office has had only four postmasters during the 50 year history of the present building. (Hyattsville's first postmaster, Christopher C. Hyatt, was the town's founder.) Mary W. Tise served from the post office's opening until June 4, 1936. She was followed by Egbert F. Tingley (1936-1970), Thomas Haw (1971-1975), and Martin Joyce (1975-present). Mary Tise was the daughter of a former Hyattsville postmaster, assuming her duties upon the death of her father in 1909. ("I Believe in America.") Tingley was a University of Maryland graduate and a member of the House of Delegates. (**Hyattsville Independent**, June 5, 1936, p. 1.) Both were natives of Hyattsville. The Post Office was upgraded from a third to a second-class post office on July 1, 1924 and advanced to a first-class post office in 1942.



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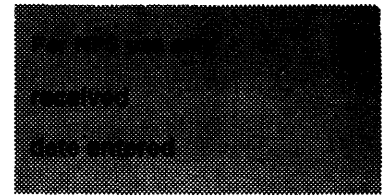
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The Hyattsville Post Office also relates to themes in Hyattsville and Prince George's County recent history and may also meet Criterion A ("associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.") The twentieth century history of Hyattsville and southern Prince George's County has been characterized by the transition from railroad transportation to the automobile and by the replacement of agricultural land use with suburban development. Indeed, Prince George's County was among the fastest growing counties in the nation during the 1940s and 1950s. Hyattsville was particularly sensitive to shifting transportation patterns since it straddled Route 1, the major highway between Washington and Baltimore, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks.

Because the Hyattsville Post Office encompassed large tracts of undeveloped land within its geographic boundaries, it was particularly affected by the large-scale suburban development characterizing southern Prince George's County. The Hyattsville Post Office became the central postal facility for southern Prince George's County eventually encompassing branches in Edmonston, Cheverly, West Hyattsville, Landover Hills, Defense Highway, Chillum, Tuxedo, West Lanham Hills, Kent Village, Adelphi, North Englewood, Queens Chapel, Prince George's Plaza, and Langley Park. When it opened in 1935, the Hyattsville Post Office served 6000 people. By 1949 this number had grown to 45,000, by 1954 to 84,000, 120,000 in 1960, and 192,000 in 1969. ("Hyattsville Post Office Records Town's History.") Population had tripled by 1949. Postal receipts did not accurately reflect the level of activity of this facility since southern Prince George's County had no large businesses or retail establishments until the mid-1950s. In 1957 Tingley reported, "...this greatly overcrowded office...has been described in the past by top officials of the Bureau of Facilities and GSA as one of the two or three very worst situations in the entire country." (Tingley to Committee on Natl. Facilities Requirements, USPD, June 5, 1957.) In 1952 he wrote, "We are now handling mail for more than 75,000 persons, about the same as Silver Spring, and more than any other town in Maryland except Baltimore City. And all this, in a building which was designed as a second-class office for a population of about 10,000." (Tingley to Sasscer, July 31, 1952.) Egbert Tingley began his long crusade for adequate postal facilities for the area in 1942, a campaign that did not yield results until the Prince George's Postal Facility was completed some 30 years later in 1970.

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**WORKS CONSULTED**

**Books:**

Short, C.W., and Stanley-Brown, R. **Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years of 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration.** Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939. (Library of Congress)

Virta, Alan. **Prince George's County: A Pictorial History.** The Donning Company Publishers, ca. 1985. (Prince George's County Memorial Library)

**Newspapers and Periodicals:**

"Farley Visions a Silver Lining at Hyattsville." **Washington Post**, June 20, 1935.

**Hyattsville Independent**, June 5, 1936. (Hyattsville Post Office)

"Hyattsville Post Office, Established in 1859, Marks First 100 Years." **The Prince George's Post**, July 23, 1959, p. 17. (PGCML)

"Hyattsville Proud of Improvements." **The Baltimore Sun**, April 2, 1938. (PGCML)

"Solution to Postal Issue Seen in 'Neutral Name' Md. P.O." **Suburban News of Prince George's County**, June 1949, p. 1.

Special Post Office Edition. **Hyattsville Independent**, June 19, 1935. (HPO)

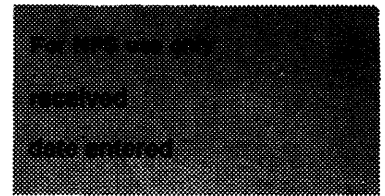
Tingley, Egbert F. "Hyattsville Post Office Records Town's History." **Prince George's Sentinel**, March 20, 1969, p. 16. (PGCML)

**Drawings:**

Prints of Architectural Drawings for the Hyattsville Post Office. (HPO)

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**Manuscripts and Unpublished Sources:**

Correspondence of Egbert F. Tingley. (HPO)

Hyattsville Post Office Scrapbook. (HPO)

"I Believe in America: 90 Years of Community Growth and Development in the City of Hyattsville." Souvenir Booklet produced by Hyattsville Mayor and City Council, 1976. (PGCML)

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. "Historic Sites & Districts Plan: Prince George's County, Maryland." n.d. (PGCML)

Record Group 121, Items 31 and 133. (National Archives)

**Interviews**

Martin Joyce, Postmaster, Hyattsville Post Office.

Francis X. Geary, local historian and author, Hyattsville, Maryland (Telephone interviews).