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FEB 08 1990

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Proctor House  
other names/site number Gilbert, Cassandra, House HA-258

### 2. Location

street & number 54 East Gordon Street  not for publication  
city, town Bel Air  vicinity  
state Maryland code 024 county Harford code 025 zip code 21014

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

[Signature] STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER Date 2/1/90

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. 3/23/90  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/government office

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other CONCRETE

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Proctor House is a two-story detached Gothic Revival cottage with board and batten siding. The house is basically L-shaped and is set on a rectangular lot with the principal entrance in the south elevation along Gordon Street. The house was constructed between 1860 and 1873 and enlarged about 1884. The initial dwelling being the center and west wing, with the east wing, porch rear ell, and possibly the entire second story, being added circa 1884. The house is structured as a central gabled section with a two-story bay window. This section projects forward (south) between a two bay west wing and a three bay east wing. A north wing extends behind the west wing. All gables are decorated with bold jig-sawn vergeboards and jig-sawn pinnacle. Two chimneys with broad bases and corbeled caps rise through the ridge line of the roof. Rafter ends are exposed under the roof sheathing and have scrolled decorative ends. Small brackets decorate and support the roofs of the two-story bay window, and recessed and molded panels decorate the space beneath the windows. The rear porch roof is supported off the wall by chamfered diagonal braces. On the interior, each section contains essentially a single space in each story. Modern partitions subdivide the two rooms in the gabled section. The east wing also contains an entrance and stair hall. Of particular note on the interior are an arched slate mantel painted to resemble several colors of inlaid marble and the stair's turned walnut newel post.

See continuation sheet for  
General Description

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Section number 7 Page 1GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Proctor House is a two-story, board and batten Gothic Revival cottage located at 54 East Gordon Street in Bel Air, Maryland. The house was originally constructed between 1860 and 1873. The present appearance in style and form dates from a circa 1884 renovation. The line of the gable roof suggests that the projecting center wing and the west wing are the original portion. At that time, when viewed from the front, the house was L-shaped with the crossbar facing Gordon Street. The east wing, porch and possibly the second floor and two-story bay were added circa 1884. The rear ell may have been added at the same time or subsequently.

The facade is divided into three distinct sections: a two bay west wing, three bay east wing and projecting center section with a two story bay window. There is a strong overhang of the eaves showing the rafter ends and the gable ends on the front (south) and side (east and west) elevations. They are decorated with bold jig-sawn vergeboards and a strong wooden crocket at the gable peak, all of which mark the building as influenced by the work of A.J. Downing. Matching chimneys with broad bases and corbeled caps rise through the ridge line of the roof, not quite evenly spaced one on each side of the projecting central wing.

The fenestration has 2/2 long Victorian double hung sash windows set in plain surrounds. Exceptions are the two floor to ceiling windows in the parlor in the east wing and the two story bay window which has small brackets decorating and supporting the roofs of the bay. Recessed and molded panels decorate the space under the windows in the first story and the second story bay is stepped back slightly. All the exterior shutters have been removed except at the two attic windows. Strong decorative brackets appear on the porch columns. The entranceway has a rectangular transom and thin sidelights paneled halfway down.

The original front porch railings have been replaced, as have the front steps which were originally wooden and are now brick.

The rear (north) elevation is irregular and plainer than the front. Several exterior modifications have been made to the ell, probably resulting from the conversion of the house from residential to office use, after being purchased by the Harford County Board of Education in 1965. An original open porch is now enclosed with a door flanked by casement windows. A wooden ramp provides access to the rear of the building.

The interior of the house is simple. In the east wing a hall contains an open-string staircase with two turned balusters per step and a polygonal walnut newel. To the east of the hall is the parlor with two floor to ceiling windows for passage onto the porch and a painted slate mantel with a round-arched opening, plain colonettes, paneled spandrels and a cartouche in the center.

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To the west of the hall are four rooms and an enclosed side entry. The room closest to the hall has been divided in recent years by a partition to make the front third of the room with the bay into a separate office. A new-classical mantel with recent brickwork is the only significant feature of the room. The next west room has a built in cupboard north of the chimney breast. In this same room, a fireplace may have been eliminated completely. One does not exist now, although, support for a hearth can be viewed from the basement. A twisting enclosed stairway connects with the rear room in the west and extends to the unfinished attic. The cellar steps are under this staircase.

The rear ell has two doorways in the west wall. In the space beyond the southerly door a porch opens to the west. It has been enclosed and subdivided (c.1965) for entry, closet and bathroom.

The cellar extends beneath the rear ell, west bay and northern section of central gable. Walls are constructed of rubblestone except at the foot of the stairs where the wall is brick. Beneath the west bay, lath and plaster was installed to the underside of the flooring between the jousts.

The exterior entrance stairs to the cellar are slate treads on brick risers.

There are three small chambers upstairs. The area in the center wing has sloping ceilings and has been divided into two rooms, the larger having the bay window. The northerly one serves as a passage between the main stair hall and west and north wings. The door and window surrounds in the rooms to the right and left of the hall have simple architrave trim. All other woodwork is plain.

The Proctor House property is an L-shaped lot situated at the corner of Franklin and Gordon Streets. These two streets form the east and south boundaries. Behind the house is a small asphalt parking lot. Historic landscaping features are not known. Several large trees are located on the property, but there is no ornamental shrubbery.

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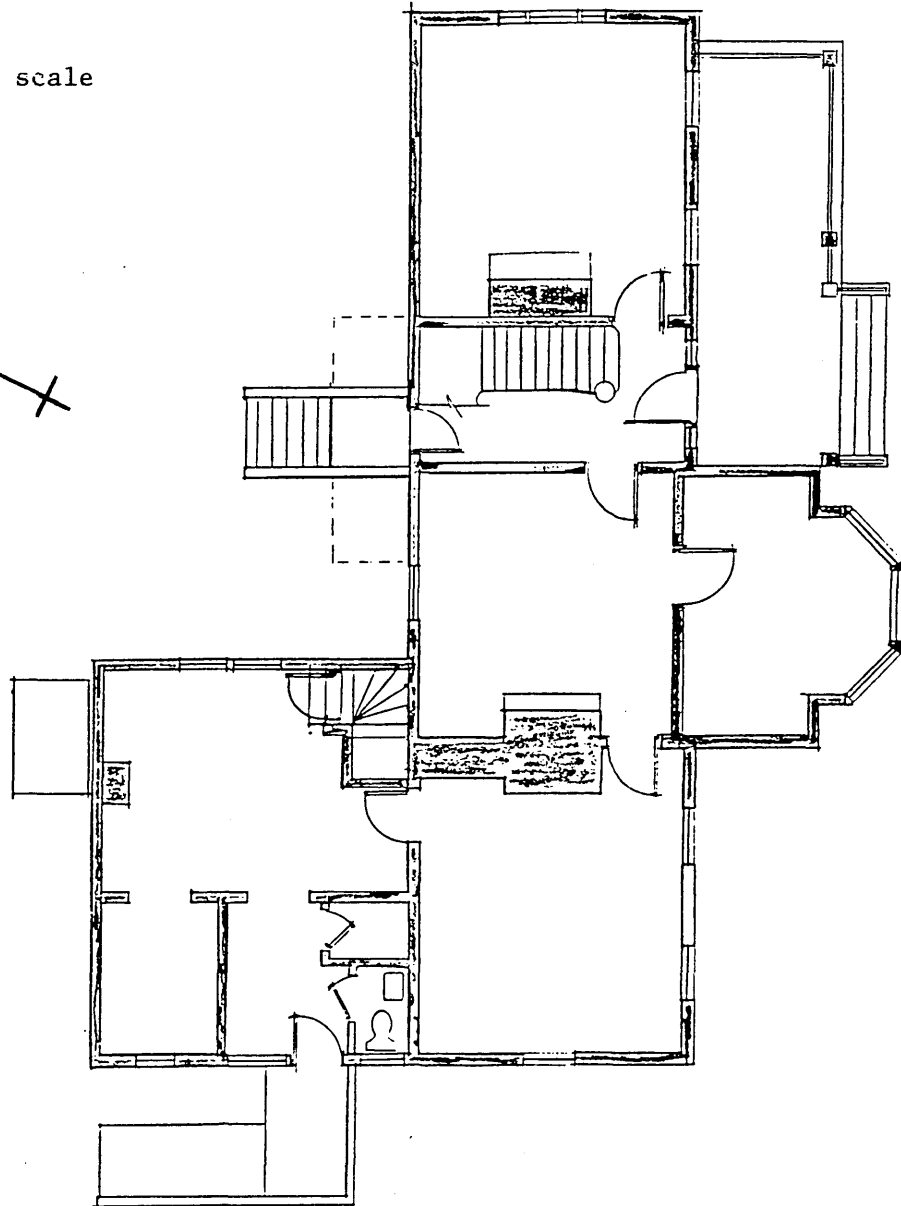
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first floor plan  
1989  
not to scale



**8. Statement of Significance**

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c.1884  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c.1884  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The significance of Proctor House is derived from its architectural merit. This two story house is the only non-religious building of the Gothic Revival style in the town of Bel Air, the seat of Harford County. It was constructed between 1860 and 1873 with the present appearance the result of circa 1884 renovations. The vertical board and batten siding, steep pitched gable roof, jig-sawn vergeboards and crocket finials mark it as having been influenced by the architectural philosophy of Andrew Jackson Downing. Downing popularized the Gothic Revival designs of architect A.J. Davis for cottages and "villas" through a trio of books he published on landscape design and architecture. Picturesque country cottages were extremely popular nationally in the 1840's and 1850's. The style continued to influence the domestic architecture of the more rural areas well after the Civil War. In Bel Air, Proctor House is an architectural link between the numerous frame and brick classical and vernacular buildings and the surge of later Victorian residential buildings that developed in the town around the coming of the railroad in 1883.

See continuation sheet for HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet 9/1

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Bel Air Historic District Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property .474 acre, less than 1 acre  
USGS Quad: Bel Air, Maryland

UTM References

A 

1	8	3	8	3	8	4	0	4	3	7	7	3	6	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet 10/1

Boundary Justification

This property consists only of the urban lot on which the resource stands.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth M. Carven  
organization Town of Bel Air; Department of Planning date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 39 Hickory Avenue telephone (301)879-9500  
city or town Bel Air state Maryland zip code 21014

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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870  
Industrial-Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1920

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category:

Building

Historic Environment:

Urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Known Design Source:

Unknown



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Section number 8 Page 2HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

Proctor House was probably built for Cassandra Gilbert between 1860 and 1873 in the village of Bel Air in Harford County. As a county seat with no industry, Bel Air developed slowly until the mid-nineteenth century. Two events brought prosperity to the area. Harford County began to can vegetables in 1867 and the railroad arrived in 1883. Bel Air was tied to Harford County's prosperity. Harford's prime location on the Chesapeake Bay between growing metropolitan areas of Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore and Washington, combined with its fertile soil, made it a prime candidate for truck farming and commercial canning. Business growth meant population growth. In 1874 Bel Air incorporated and the town expanded eastward on two new streets, one being Gordon where Proctor House stands.

This small-town Gothic cottage is the only building of its kind in Bel Air. Harford County has a good example of a Gothic Revival house in brick with leaded casements in the 1847 Tudor Hall, the home of the famous Booth family (Edwin Thomas, and John Wilkes). This picturesque style did not become popular within the town, and Proctor House remained unique. Its vertical board and batten siding, steep pitched gable roof, ornamented vergeboards and crocket finial all mark it as having been influenced by the architectural philosophy of Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852), landscape gardener and architectural critic of Newburgh, New York. Downing was annoyed at the architectural trends of his time. What we today regard as exuberance in decoration, he saw as vulgar pretension and bad taste and he set out to do something about it. In a trio of very popular books, A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America (1841), Cottage Residences (first edition 1842), and The Architecture of Country Houses (first edition 1850), Downing set out to explain the proper definitions of the Useful, the Beautiful, and the True in architecture. He was not himself trained as an architect; he publicized the designs of men such as A.J. Davis, Richard Upjohn, and Gervase Wheeler. With these designs he showed Americans "The Real Meaning of Architecture" - how symmetry, variety, harmony, and most important, Truth, should come together to form a building that was Beautiful. His work probably had more to do with forming the architectural taste of mid 19th century Americans than that of any other person (Larew, p. 50).

As detailed in the books, each batten, or strip covering the crack between the wider boards of Proctor House, is chamfered or beveled. Rafter ends are exposed under the roof sheathing, again as detailed so many times, and have scrolled decorative ends. A bold jig-sawn decoration ornaments all gables, terminating in a jig-sawn pinnacle at the peak and is believed to be unique in Harford County. The two chimneys rise through the roof with broad bases or podia, have their shafts slightly recessed, and terminate in a decorative corbeled cap.

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Small brackets decorate and support the roofs of the two story bay window in the front gable, and recessed and molded panels decorate the space beneath the windows. The parlor windows extend to the floor, allowing a reasonable passage through them to the front porch or piazza as it was called in the early publications. The porch columns and decorative brackets are good examples of the early woodworkers' art. The back porch roof is supported off the wall by chamfered diagonal braces. Also surviving is a rare horizontally-operating latch on the east window.

Proctor House has two examples of interesting uses of native and once abundant materials. The front porch piers are single pieces of slate and a carved granite splash pan remains under one of the downspouts.

In Bel Air, the Proctor House may be seen as the link between the many frame and brick classical and vernacular buildings, many of them now demolished, and the burst of Victorian domestic building that hit the Town for a few years around the coming of the railroad, the dividing line, between the domesticated classical styles that reflected Americans' fascination with English, Roman, and Greek styles and the development of a mature native style for our rapidly expanding, young country (Larew, p. 50).

This particular house was probably built in two sections, the center and west wings first, between 1860 and 1873 and the east wing in 1884. Though, according to James Wollen, local architectural historian, it is possible that the original house was a simple one-story dwelling, and that the entire second floor and two-story gable were post Civil War additions. This suggestion is based on two factors: (1) the cellar is only beneath the north and west wings and the northerly part of the central section and (2) construction of the attic appears contemporaneous (Larew, p. 113 and Wollen).

Cassandra Gilbert had the house built after 1860, when she acquired 1-1/2 acres from Charles Lee and his wife for \$245. The property changed hands in 1879 when it was purchased from her estate by Charles W. Proctor for \$1,500. A note in the Harford Democrat for April 25, 1873, notes the sale of Mrs. Gilbert's house and lot on Gordon Street to C.W. Proctor. It took six years for the Orphan's Court to approve the sale.

The alterations to the house were made for Mr. Proctor shortly after his purchase of the property was completed. According to the April 25, 1884 issue of the Harford Democrat, C.W. Proctor was adding to his house on Gordon Street that spring. This may have been the east wing, or as noted before, the entire second floor and front projecting gable.

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C.W. Proctor died in 1904, but his widow, Sophia, resided in the house, raising twelve children, until her own death in 1949. The property then passed jointly to Elizabeth Proctor Simon and her brother, J. Armfield Proctor and eventually to Elizabeth Simon and her husband, George. The Simons occupied the house until 1965 when it was purchased by the Harford County Board of Education for its present use as administrative offices.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Downing, Andrew Jackson. The Architecture of Country Houses. 1850. Reprint. New York: Dover, 1969.

Land Records of Harford County, Courthouse, Bel Air, Maryland.

Larew, Marilyn. Bel Air: The Town Through Its Buildings. Edgewood, Maryland: The Town of Bel Air and the Maryland Historical Trust, 1980.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties: Harford County. Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, Maryland.

Wollen, James, Thomas, Jr., "Preliminary Historic Structure Report, The Proctor House." Prepared for Michael S. Proctor, M.D. and Sallie Van Rensselaer, Advisor to the Board of Education for the Preservation of Proctor House. March, 1989.

Wright, C. Milton. Our Harford Heritage. Bel Air, Maryland: privately printed, 1967.

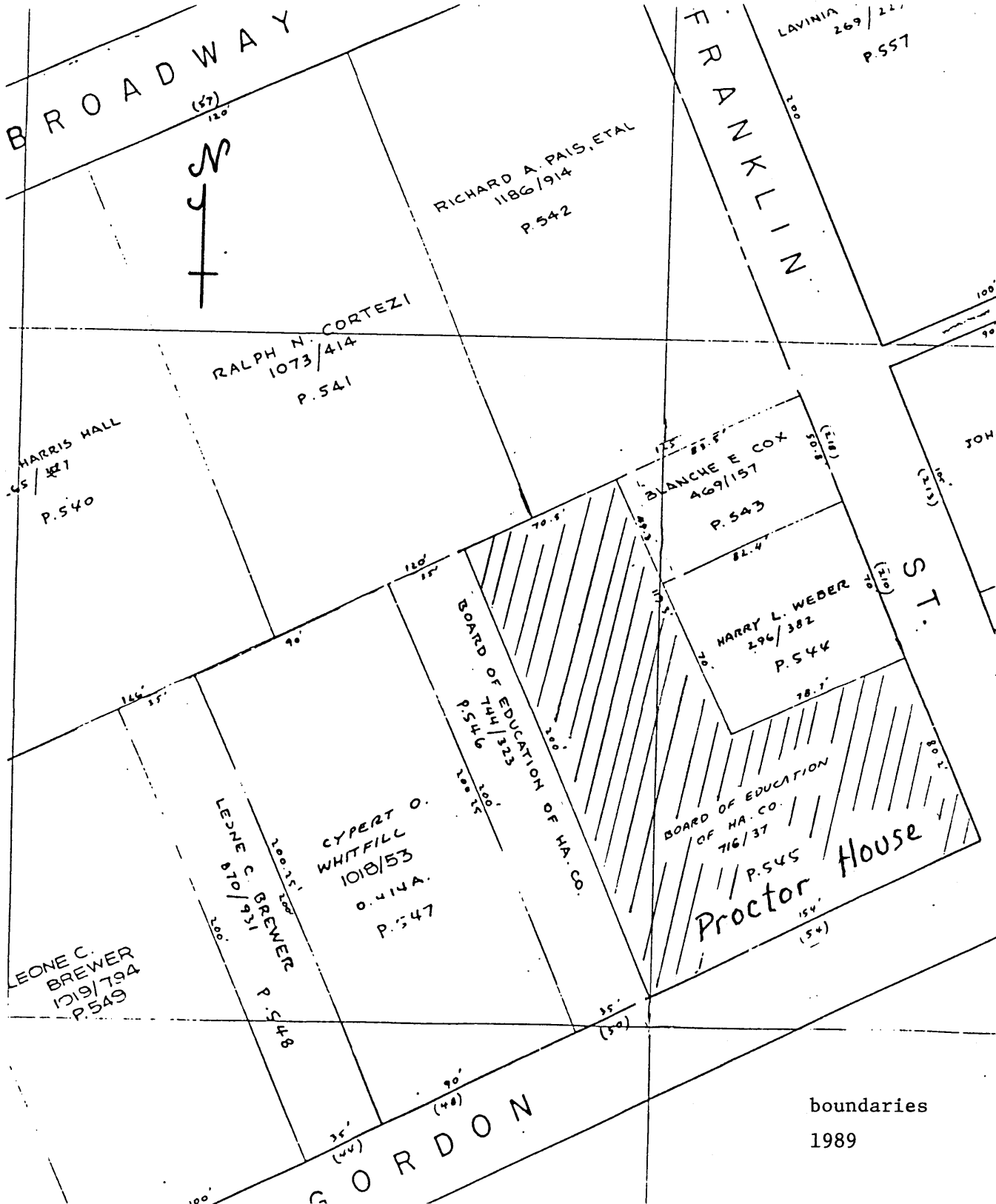
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boundaries  
1989