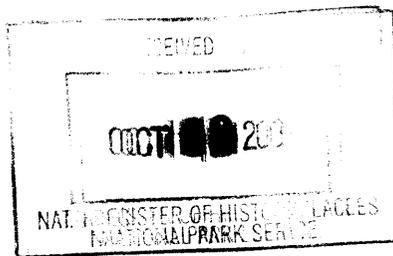


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1173

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

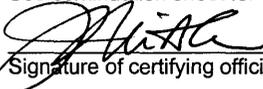
historic name Gay Street Historic District
other names B-3994

2. Location

street & number Bounded by North Gay St., Fallsway, Low St., and North Exeter St. not for publication
city or town Baltimore vicinity
state Maryland code MD county Baltimore City code 510 zip code 21202

3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).


Signature of certifying official/Title

10-7-03
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title

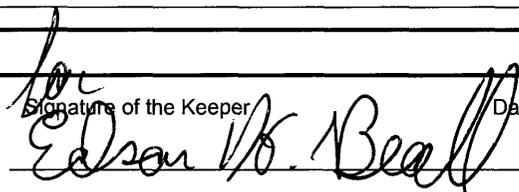
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - 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 of the Keeper
Edson W. Beall Date of Action 11/21/03

Gay Street Historic District (B-3994)
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
34	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
34	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Cast Iron Architecture of Baltimore, Maryland 1850-1904

2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE/ financial institution

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

LATE VICTORIAN/Second Empire

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVIALS/Beaux Arts

foundation BRICK, STONE

walls BRICK, STONE/Limestone, METAL/Iron

roof ASPHALT, STONE/Slate

other METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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Description Summary:

The Gay Street Historic District, located to the east of the main downtown business district of Baltimore City, is a notable example of a late 19th- and early 20th-century commercial corridor in a developing urban area. The historic district is best understood within a variety of contexts— including the commercial development of the area, early commercial architecture building types, and the development of cast-iron architecture. Within Baltimore City, the Gay Street Historic District appears to be unique in its high concentration of small-scale commercial buildings. With only a single exception, the contributing buildings within the district are either commercial in nature or directly support commercial or light manufacturing enterprises.

From its inception, the Gay Street Historic District was geographically segregated from the main downtown area of Baltimore by the location of the Jones Falls (and later the Jones Falls Expressway) to its west. Originally part of a larger rural and agrarian enclave known as Old Town, the area was annexed into the city boundaries in 1792. However, the Gay Street Historic District did not take on its present appearance until the mid-19th century, when small commercial enterprises and light manufacturing enterprises were established. The post-Civil War years were ones of particular growth in the area, with banks and insurance companies making their headquarters on Gay Street. The architecture exemplifies this period in American history and contains buildings displaying Victorian Eclectic, Beaux Arts, Italianate, and Romanesque elements. Also in the years following the Civil War, two full-front, cast-iron buildings were constructed within blocks of each other on Gay Street. In a city that once had literally hundreds of such buildings, only ten remain in Baltimore today. In addition to the cast-iron buildings, the collection of commercial buildings in the Gay Street Historic District display a broad range of architectural styles and commercial building types. Although the street-level facades of most of the buildings have been altered since their construction, they collectively continue to convey the commercial history of the Gay Street area. Unlike the nearby Jones Town locally designated historic district, which contains a collection of residential, commercial, sacred, and public buildings, the buildings found within the Gay Street Historic District are almost entirely commercial, with some related light manufacturing buildings--most notably small warehouses and garages--found on the side streets of the district.

General Description:

The Gay Street Historic District is a small commercial enclave within Baltimore City. The land that comprises the Gay Street Historic District was previously part of a larger area known as Old Town and contains excellent examples of small-scale, attached, commercial architecture dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The district also encompasses two cast iron-front buildings, of which a total of only ten remain in the city. The streetscape of the area is relatively simple. Buildings are situated directly on the sidewalk. No landscaped areas are present.

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Buildings in the district represent a broad array of commercial building types. Several bank buildings and warehouses are interspersed with more traditional commercial structures. The collection of buildings conveys the area's commercial history, although the street-level storefronts of almost all of the buildings have been altered. Many of the buildings retain skillful architectural details, including ornate cornices and window surrounds. Others display intricate brick work and original historic doors. All of the buildings are two to five stories in height with the exception of the Old Town National Bank which rises to seven stories.

Some alterations to the district have occurred. On the south side of the 300 block of North Gay Street, historic buildings have been covered during a complete renovation and now appear as a single new building, resulting in the only noncontributing resource within the district boundaries. Some demolition of commercial buildings has also occurred. Outside of the district boundaries, on the northern side of the 300 block of North Gay Street, is the new Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center. Otherwise, the district remains largely intact to its period of significance.

Contributing Buildings within the Gay Street Historic District

The following buildings are contributing resources to the Gay Street Historic District.¹

*Cast-Iron Architecture within the Gay Street Historic District*²

Full-front, cast-iron buildings are located at 239 and 353 North Gay Street. These buildings represent an increasingly rare type of construction in Baltimore.³ The city once had numerous examples of full-front cast-iron buildings, but many have been demolished. Two of only extant ten full-front, cast-iron buildings are within the boundaries of the Gay Street Historic District.

The building at 239 North Gay Street was constructed ca. 1875 and is three stories in height with a full cast-iron front. A single bay of cast iron wraps around the side (north) facade and cast-iron window hoods also top window openings. Italianate in style, cast-iron elements include ornate columns and piers and a heavy overhanging cornice that features modillions and curved brackets. Windows on the main facade are hung in triplicate and feature large, round-arch openings with two-over-two, double-hung configurations.

¹Note that the numbering system of Gay Street as well as the side streets within the district is complex. Numbering sequences are not always sequential or logical, and over the course of time buildings that appear visually distinct have been used for a single business enterprise and have assumed a single street address. The side elevations of buildings that front Gay Street have been given street addresses reflecting a location on the side streets. However, they are part of the main building and not separate structures. In all cases, the Gay Street address has been used as the primary address. It is also important to note that previous architectural studies and surveys have included misinformation and incorrect building numbers.

²The cast-iron buildings at 239 and 353 North Gay Street are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Multiple Property Submission, "Cast-Iron Architecture of Baltimore, 1850-1900."

³In addition to the ten buildings with full-iron facades, 16 buildings in Baltimore have iron storefronts.

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The first level of 239 North Gay Street was filled in with metal, concrete block, brick, and Carrara glass ca. 1940. The interior of the building retains original bull's-eye window surrounds and doors, and an original staircase. The building is currently in poor condition, with the third level suffering from severe water damage.

The cast-iron building at 353 North Gay Street, known as the Old Town Savings Bank (but not to be confused with another building bearing the same name at the corner of North Gay Street and the Fallsway) features two full-metal facades, making it unique in Baltimore. Designed by the noted Baltimore architect Frank Davis, the building was constructed in 1871 and sits on the corner of North Gay and Exeter Streets. Although the Old Town Savings Bank purchased the lot ca. 1861, the institution waited until after the Civil War to construct the building. Davis, who was responsible for numerous buildings in Baltimore and elsewhere in Maryland, employed the iron foundry of Variety Iron Works in York, Pennsylvania, to cast the architectural elements.⁴

The building is three stories in height and is less ornate than the cast-iron building at 239 North Gay Street. The columns have modest capitals and the cornice is simpler. Small cast-iron panels decorate the spandrels. Window openings are rounded arches and cover much of both of the iron facades. Although the street level of 353 North Gay Street has been filled in with brick, the upper stories articulate the building's original cast-iron frame.

Old Town National Bank

The largest and most imposing building within the Gay Street Historic District is the Old Town National Bank. Constructed in 1925 in the Beaux Arts style, it is located on the southeast corner of North Gay Street and the Fallsway at 221 North Gay Street. The limestone facade features rusticated blocks with an ornate street-level facade. The vault-like, double doors are topped with a large fanlight and flanked by two sets of attached Corinthian columns and a pair of Corinthian pilasters. Panels depicting commercial activity and swags and garlands are found around the entryway, and a carved keystone tops the fanlight.

The mid-section of the building is comparatively plain. Rectangular window openings are interspersed with vertical bands of limestone. While the Gay Street and Fallsway elevations are executed in limestone, the remaining elevations are brick.

However, the top level of the bank, like the street level, is highly ornamented. Window openings alternate with typical Beaux Arts motifs, such as swags, garlands, and cartouches. A protruding beltcourse beneath the top level provides further articulation. An overhanging cornice with modillions tops the building.

⁴Among Davis' other notable commissions in Baltimore are the Orchard Street Church and the Western District Police Station. He also designed several schools in Baltimore County.

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Commercial Buildings

The majority of the remaining commercial buildings within the Gay Street Historic District display various architectural features of the Victorian era in which they were constructed. Decorative brickwork, picturesque rooflines, and terra-cotta and cast-iron embellishments are common within the district.

The buildings at 235 and 237 North Gay Street, constructed ca. 1850, are among the more modest as well as the earliest buildings in the district. Both are Federal-era rowhouses that exemplify the two-part commercial block, where commercial dominated the ground levels and living space was located on the upper levels of buildings.

Three connected buildings comprise 325-329 North Gay Street. One of the more skillfully articulated buildings within the Gay Street Historic District is 329 North Gay Street. Constructed in 1920, the building features intricate brick work in two-tone, basketweave patterns as well as terra-cotta panels. Three stories in height, the building contains elements of the Victorian eclectic and Romanesque styles. A small brick building is located at 327 North Gay and is devoid of ornamentation with the exception of a gable-roof dormer and flat arches with prominent keystones over second-story windows. A three-story brick building at 325 North Gay Street completes the block and is similarly simple in style. It dates from 1900.

A row of four commercial buildings is located at 218-224 North Gay Street. They are all two to four stories in height with minimal features of the Italianate style, and all were constructed in 1920. The most ornate features on each buildings are their moulded cornices which feature supporting brackets and modillion courses.

The longest row of connected buildings within the Gay Street corridor includes 331-353 North Gay Street. Nine distinct buildings are present. At 331 North Gay Street is a large, simple brick building dating from 1920 connected to a similarly simple building at 335 North Gay Street which dates from the same year. The building at 337 North Gay Street (1920) is covered with Formstone, but continues to convey its commercial history. Two, three-story commercial buildings with Italianate features are next in the row of buildings. To the east of the Italianate buildings, at 343 North Gay Street, is a four-story, Second Empire building with two hipped and two gable-roof dormers set into its mansard roof. Constructed in 1910, the building features flat and jack-arched window openings and corbelled brick ornamentation. Two Italianate buildings with prominent, overhanging cornices are found to the east along the street and are collectively numbered as 347-351 North Gay Street. While an attempt has been made to unify the two buildings by painting a business sign continuously across the two facades, the buildings remain distinct. They were constructed in 1910. The previously mentioned cast-iron building at 353 North Gay Street completes the block.

Buildings found along the side streets (Front, High, Low, and Exeter Streets, Pothouse Alley, and the Fallsway) are more modest in appearance than those lining the main Gay Street corridor. Distinct buildings tend to be two stories in height and constructed of brick with minimal architectural decoration and flat roofs. The building at

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312 N. High Street (ca. 1900) features segmental arch openings, with corbeled brick surrounds and limestone keystones and a beltcourse. Similar features are found on the modest four-story building at 301 N. High Street. The first story is articulated with recessed brick. However, the upper levels feature flat arches above the windows and limestone sills. A simple moulded cornice tops the building. The buildings comprising 323-327 N. High Street are small, attached brick buildings constructed between 1900 and 1920, as is the 1920 building at 318 N. Exeter Street.

Three connected buildings at 358-364 North Gay Street on the eastern edge of the Gay Street historic district date from ca. 1890 and display some exemplary architectural features. At 362-364 North Gay Street, the Payne Buildings is a large brick building with three bays. Three, round-arched openings dominate the facade. At the cornice line, projecting corbelled brick pilasters accentuate the bays. A carved limestone cartouche and finials top the building. To the west of the Payne Building at 360 North Gay Street is a modest pale-brick building with an overhanging wood cornice with modillions and a street-level, oriel display window. At the end of the row at 358 North Gay Street is the Old Town Insurance Company building. Constructed ca. 1890, the rough-cut granite facade is dominated by a full-width, round-arch opening with a limestone keystone and voussoirs. The cornice line of the building features a wave motif and the roofline is topped with a pedimented parapet containing the name of the building.

Early Warehouses and Garages and Other Building Types

In the blocks surrounding the main Gay Street corridor, the side streets contain buildings that support the main commercial strip. Warehouses and garages with minimal architectural adornment are common. These buildings retain original features that convey their purposes. Industrial, multipane, hopper windows are found on the building at 301 N. Front Street.⁵ Across the street at 300 N. Front is another garage building constructed of brick and built in 1920. It is connected to 319 Fallsway and 324 N. Front Street, similar industrial buildings from the same era.

The single building that was not commercial in nature is 301 N. High Street, which was constructed in 1890 and was a home for orphaned Catholic boys. Rising four stories and constructed of brick, the building features minimal articulation at the street level and is topped with a simple cornice.

Noncontributing Buildings

The building at 301 North Gay Street is the only noncontributing resource within the Gay Street Historic District. In the late 1990s, a complete renovation rendered historic buildings (originally numbered as 301-307)

⁵This building is also numbered as 301 Fallsway in some city records.

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unrecognizable. The new construction observes the setback and scale and massing of the contributing historic buildings on North Gay Street and does not significantly detract from the overall character of the district.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1850-1934

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Frank E. Davis, architect Old Town Savings Bank
Other unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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Summary Statement of Significance:

The Gay Street Historic District meets National Register Criterion C as an example of a small-scale urban commercial area of the late 19th-early 20th century period. The key buildings are excellent examples of late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture and epitomize widespread commercial building types of that period in American architecture. The majority of the commercial buildings which comprise the Gay Street Historic District convey the area's history as a local commercial corridor distinct from the more intensive, large-scale development of downtown Baltimore to the west.

Within Baltimore City, the Gay Street Historic District appears to be unique in its high concentration of small-scale commercial buildings. Other districts with similar commercial buildings also include significant numbers of residential, ecclesiastical, and/or public buildings. With only a single exception, the contributing buildings within the Gay Street Historic District are either commercial in nature or directly support commercial or light manufacturing enterprises. The Gay Street Historic District conveys the commercial history of an area that is discrete from the main downtown area of Baltimore. With buildings that are smaller in scale than many of the downtown buildings of the same era, the Gay Street corridor displays more of a neighborhood commercial character, in contrast to the large department stores and early skyscrapers in the downtown. Furthermore, because the Gay Street corridor escaped Baltimore's Great Fire in 1904, the evolution of the commercial area is unchanged by natural disaster, unlike areas of downtown that were rebuilt en masse after the conflagration.

Strongly contributing to the National Register eligibility of the Gay Street Historic District is the district's overall high degree of integrity. The Gay Street Historic District retains its integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association primarily because it retains its significant collection of commercial buildings with few intrusions. The degree of integrity of materials and workmanship is also high despite the alteration of street-level facades. The period of significance for the Gay Street Historic District begins in 1850 when the first extant commercial buildings within the district boundaries were constructed and extends to 1934 when the Orleans Street Viaduct was built, cutting the area off from the remaining portion of Old Town and initiating an economic and social decline in the once-vibrant commercial corridor.

Resource History and Historic Context:

The Gay Street Historic District is part of a larger area originally known as Jones Town. Founded in 1732 as an independent city, Jones Town was incorporated into the city limits of Baltimore in 1745. After that time, the area that now encompasses the Gay Street Historic District (as well as land to the west) was commonly called Old Town. The Jones Town name was retained when referring to an area south of the Gay Street Historic District.⁶

⁶Jones Town is located to the south of the Gay Street Historic District and developed distinctly from Old Town. In 2002, Jones Town was designated as a local historic district. The boundaries do not overlap with the boundaries of the Gay Street Historic District.

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The land comprising the Gay Street Historic District was part of a late 17th-century land grant called Todd's Range. Located east of the Jones Falls (and the present-day Jones Falls Expressway), Todd's Range was primarily an agricultural region through the first third of the 18th century. A ca. 1726 survey of a 1,000-acre tract of land showed five buildings—two dwellings, a water mill, a storehouse and a tobacco house—surrounded by orchards and corn fields. In 1732, the area east of the Jones Falls was incorporated as Jones Town and a series of 20 half-acre plots were laid out parallel to the flood plain of the Jones Falls. Bridge (now Gay) Street connected Jones Town to the rapidly developing Baltimore Town, which annexed Jones Town in 1745.⁷

As Old Town developed, the Jones Falls flood plain was filled in 1766 and the Jones Falls waterway was straightened by being diverted through a canal. Historic documentation indicates that Old Town was typical of many rapidly developing urban areas. Most residents were working-class citizens such as flour millers, blacksmiths, and tanners. The Jones Falls waterways emitted noxious vapors and putrid effluvia, leading wealthier citizens to locate in more bucolic settings. In 1811 and 1812, two ordinances were passed in an attempt to improve the quality of life and the health of citizens of the area. The discharge of privies directly into the Jones Falls was outlawed and the construction of wooden buildings, turpentine distilleries, varnish factories, and slaughterhouses was outlawed.⁸

Between 1820 and 1865, the overall land use pattern of Old Town began to change. Middle-class residents were replaced by immigrants and the frame dwellings in the area were gradually replaced by brick buildings that were commercial and industrial in character. Single-family, owner-occupied buildings were replaced with mixed-use buildings that combined commercial and retail uses with residential space. Gay Street (then known as Bridge Street) emerged as a principal commercial thoroughfare.

The post-Civil War years were a time of major industrial and manufacturing expansion in Baltimore, an impact that was felt on Gay Street. Due to Gay Street's location to downtown Baltimore, it became a particularly attractive location for industries. The resulting congestion, noxious fumes, and noise prompted most of the remaining residents to relocate to more residential areas. The 1865 Baltimore City Directories show a shoe store, tobacconists, a brush factory, and a hardware store within the boundaries of the Gay Street Historic District.

The Baltimore Transfer Company was located at the corner of Front and Low Streets at 301-317 Front Street with annex space at 328-330 Front Street. Founded in 1867 as Geigan & Company, it was a freight service for moving equipment and merchandise throughout Baltimore. The company built, repaired, and housed its own wagons, made its own harnesses, and shod its own horses. By 1895, the company had an exclusive contract

⁷Sherry Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 8.

⁸John Milner & Associates, Inc., *An Archival Investigation of Archeological Resources Associated with Interstate Route 83, Gay Street to I-95, Baltimore, Maryland*. Submitted to the Maryland Department of Transportation, 1982, 41-42.

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with the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to transfer all of its freight through Baltimore. Both Baltimore Transfer Company buildings are extant.⁹

A tailoring factory was located at 317-321 N. High Street, next door to the St. James Home for Boys at 301 N. High Street. Opened in 1890 by Cardinal Gibbons of the Baltimore Archdiocese, the building appears to be the single building within the Gay Street Historic District that has no direct commercial or manufacturing connection. Established as a group home for boys without families, the residents routinely worked at local businesses. St. James's most famous resident was perhaps the young Babe Ruth, who lived at the home for two months when he was 15 years old. St. James continued to operate until 1951, when it was purchased by the Maryland Cup Company.¹⁰

By 1895, a number of Jewish immigrants founded clothing businesses within the district. These textile businesses were common in the district until the end of the 1920s, when the garment business shifted to other areas of the city. Because of its relative isolation east of downtown, Gay Street attracted some light manufacturing industries such as tanneries, livery services, furniture manufactures, and sweatshops. Consequences of these businesses included minor noise and dirtiness. However, hardware stores, shoe shops, wholesale food shops, insurance, and banking industries were also present and preserved a balance within the district.¹¹

Cast-Iron Architecture in Baltimore

The Gay Street Historic District contains two examples of full-front, cast-iron architecture. They are significant remnants of an important but short-lived building tradition in the United States. Although iron has been used by humans as early as 5,000 years ago, and the first known piece of cast iron dates to 1350 A.D., it was not until the Industrial Revolution that Victorian-era engineers used iron's structural and decorative qualities to construct entire building facades.¹²

Unlike wrought iron, which is worked by hand or machine, cast iron is formed by pouring heated liquid iron into a mold. Because of its high carbon content, cast iron has great compressive strength, with the ability to withstand a downward force of approximately 40 tons per square inch—making it ideal for use in architectural members like columns and allowing for relatively slim members to uphold significant weights. However, its tensile strength is relatively weak by comparison, measuring approximately 15 tons per square inch, and necessitating more massive horizontal beams. After setting in molds, cast-iron members are brittle, and will

⁹R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, "Gay Street Historic District," 1997, 8.5.

¹⁰Ibid., 8.6.

¹¹Ibid., 8.7.

¹²James D. Dilts, Introduction to *Baltimore's Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Work*, 2nd ed. Edited by James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 2000), 3.

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fracture like stone.¹³ Because of this, most cast-iron buildings were usually limited to five or six stories; if they were any higher, the cumulative weight was too great for the lower floor beams to bear.¹⁴

To manufacture cast-iron elements, “fine-grained molding sand mixed with clay binder is packed around a pattern that looks exactly like the casting to be produced. After the mold is separated into two halves, the pattern is removed, leaving a hollow impression. When the two halves of the mold are put back together and clamped, the impression can be filled with molten iron poured through a hole, called a sprue, in the top half. After cooling, the casting is removed from the sand mold, cleaned, and machined if necessary before being used in its intended location.”¹⁵

Cast iron was often used to imitate other building materials, including cut stone. Elaborate cornices and column capitals were commonly executed. Unlike stone, cast iron was immensely more strong and could be executed using more slender members, allowing for an overall lightness and airiness to any structure, and saving money by reducing weight and foundation requirements. Likewise, a high level of detail could be achieved using cast iron compared to stone. Intricate architectural details such as those found in the popular modes of the Victorian era could be rendered in detail.¹⁶

Cast-iron architecture also allowed for unprecedented speed in constructing buildings.

When properly manufactured and prefitted, a cast-iron facade took much less time to erect than traditional masonry. The years required for cut stone construction was reduced to months or even weeks with cast iron, and this feature also pleased building owners who could occupy their properties in less time.¹⁷

Between 50 and 150 different patterns were required for a typical five- or six-story building. Some of these patterns were used repeatedly to construct identical members that were used repetitively, resulting in thousands of castings. More repetition resulted in lower building costs.¹⁸

The British were the first to use cast iron for major structural purposes. In England, the Industrial Revolution preceded American progress until approximately 1850, when American efforts caught up. With the advent of the use of cast-iron in architecture—not only for decorative purposes, but also for structural support—the construction of new types of buildings were possible. The world’s first multistory iron-framed building was

¹³Ibid., 4.

¹⁴J. Scott Howell in “The Founder’s Art” in *Baltimore’s Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Work*, 2nd ed. Edited by James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 2000), 13.

¹⁵Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁶Ibid., 15.

¹⁷Ibid., 17.

¹⁸Ibid., 18.

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William Strutt's calico mill constructed in 1792 in Derby, England. The construction of the first American cast-iron bridge in Brownsville, Pennsylvania, occurred in 1839 on the National Road, and by the middle of the nineteenth century the United States was beginning to see the first uses of cast iron as architectural elements. In 1854, wrought-iron beams were used in several buildings in New York. However, three years earlier, two pivotal iron buildings were constructed—the Crystal Palace in London and the Sun Iron Building in Baltimore. While neither were the first of their kinds, they served as prototypes for future iron buildings. The Crystal Palace, built by Joseph Paxton for the Great London Exposition in 1851, consisted of an iron skeleton with approximately 6,600 members. The Sun Iron Building in Baltimore was a five-story building with two, full, iron-front facades and “an internal support system of cast-iron columns and beams [and] was the initial, large-scale commercial application of James Bogardus's system of all-iron construction.”¹⁹

James Bogardus is generally credited with developing the idea for the construction of a “multistory building with a self-supporting cast-iron prefabricated facade of mass-produced molded iron elements that could be assembled to replicate traditional architecture” and that emulated “architectural designs of antiquity.”²⁰ Bogardus' tireless campaign for the use of cast-iron as a material in architecture is well documented, and he is widely recognized as for promoting this new method of building in America, securing its widespread use in major cities. With the construction of the Sun Iron Building in Baltimore, Bogardus raised the level of awareness among his contribution to the city's collection of cast-iron buildings more than just promotion or advocacy. With the completion of the Sun Iron Building, designers and residents saw the potential for cast iron, and its use spread throughout Baltimore in subsequent years.²¹

After the construction of the Sun Building, numerous orders for cast-iron buildings were made, and, fortunately, the local iron industry had grown enough to accommodate this rush. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad connected Baltimore with the 26 furnaces that were producing approximately 30,000 tons of iron each year. During this time, the two full-front, cast-iron buildings on Gay Street were constructed. However, the use of iron was relatively short lived in Maryland. Iron production decreased dramatically by the 1880s, when steel beams were used with increasing frequency.²²

The advent of steel and the new construction techniques it inspired doomed the cast-iron front. The period between 1850 and 1900, roughly, as iron became steel and the typical downtown commercial building grew from five to twenty stories or higher, was its brief hour on the stage.²³

¹⁹Dilts in *Baltimore's Cast Iron Buildings*, 6-7.

²⁰Margot Gayle and Carol Gayle, *Cast-Iron Architecture in America: The Significance of James Bogardus* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company), 70 and 94.

²¹David G. Wright, “The Sun Iron Building,” in *Baltimore's Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Work*, 2nd ed. Edited by James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black (Centreville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 2000), 23.

²²Dilts in *Baltimore's Cast Iron Buildings*, 10.

²³*Ibid.*, 10.

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Coupled with the shift to steel was an adverse reaction to the ornate decorative elements of the Victorian era. Sleek, streamlined buildings began to appear and cast-iron-front buildings fell out of favor.

The introduction of iron as a primary structural material in the nineteenth century has been called the single greatest step in the history of civil engineering, because it freed both engineers and architects from their dependence on traditional wood and masonry and allowed them to experiment with new forms and combinations in bridges as well as buildings. The period of reliance on cast and wrought iron was the shortest for any major construction material, and the era of iron's influence one of the least understood.²⁴

Commercial Building Types in the Gay Street Historic District

In addition to the cast-iron commercial buildings in the Gay Street Historic District, there exists a critical collection of late 19th- and early 20th century commercial buildings. Despite the fact that many large cities as well as small towns boast collections of commercial buildings—either impressive groupings or small remnants—relatively few broad scholarly studies of these building types exist. The best resource for categorizing commercial buildings is *The Buildings of Main Street* by Richard Longstreth. First published in 1987 and reprinted in 2000, this book examines and classifies numerous commercial building types found throughout the United States. The Gay Street Historic District features several types of buildings described by Longstreth. Together, these buildings convey the variety of commercial archetypes found in the Gay Street Historic District at the turn of the 20th century. While it is not necessary to classify each building, a brief analysis shows that the Gay Street Historic District contains a broad cross section of types, representing a significant collection of commercial buildings.

The buildings at 235 and 237 North Gay Street are classified as two-part commercial blocks and are perhaps best described as a shop-house combination, although other private uses, such as office or meeting spaces, were also prevalent. Common from the 1850s through the 1950s, the two-part block is a typical form in many commercial areas throughout the country. Found in smaller commercial buildings, there is a distinct division between the public (commercial) zones and the private (residential) ones. Gradually, the shop-house combination fell from favor as commercial and professional interests boomed and land values increased. Longstreth points out that examples of the two-part commercial block dating from the 1840s and 1850s usually display little exterior ornamentation, as is the case with 235 and 237 North Gay Street.²⁵

The two-part vertical block is also a common form and is present within the Gay Street Historic District. Compared to the two-part commercial block, buildings must be at least four stories in height, with the upper

²⁴Ibid., 10.

²⁵Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2000) 24-29.

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stories receiving the architectural emphasis. Although most of the street-level facades of the buildings within the Gay Street Historic District have been altered, the prominent upper stories remain intact.²⁶ The building at 218 North Gay Street is an example.

The Old Town National Bank at the corner of North Gay Street and the Fallsway is an excellent example of the three-part vertical block, which imitates the three elements of the classical column--base, shaft, and capital--within the greater horizontal composition of the building. The lower stories of the building serve to anchor the building much as the base of a column would. In the case of the Old Town Savings Bank, the lower levels are treated with elaborate columns and pilasters flanking a vault-like set of doors. The mid-stories, which make up the majority of the building, are consistent in appearance, and are topped with a distinct upper zone. This upper area may feature a different fenestration pattern or more prominent ornamentation. Mature examples of the type may feature engaged pilasters in the upper zone, as is the case of the Old Town Savings Bank.²⁷

Other buildings are combinations of types, such as the Payne Building at 362-364 North Gay Street. It incorporates elements of the arcaded block with its three, large, round-arch openings.

Manufacturing Buildings

As building types, the warehouses and garages found within the district display the support and manufacturing facilities found within the Gay Street Historic District. The warehouse/garage at 301 North Gay Street was constructed ca. 1905, the same year a parlor-furniture manufacturer opened at 300-312 N. Front Street. In 1920, an industrial building was constructed at 300 N. Fallsway.

Conclusion

When the Orleans Street Viaduct was constructed in 1934, it cut a diagonal swath that severed the Gay Street Historic District from the eastern portion of Old Town. Also at that time, the commercial viability of the Gay Street corridor gradually began to decline. However, the buildings in the district retain a high level of integrity to the period of significance and the combination of building types and styles collectively forms a significant group of commercial architecture.

²⁶Ibid., 82.

²⁷Ibid., 82-99.

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Maps

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 11 acres

UTM References Baltimore East quad
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

A	1 8	3 6 1 4 1 8	4 3 5 0 5 2 2	C	1 8	3 6 1 3 4 5	4 3 5 0 2 1 7
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
B	1 8	3 6 1 5 2 5	4 3 5 0 2 1 7	D	1 8	3 6 1 2 2 8	4 3 5 0 3 1 5

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephanie Foell and Judith Robinson, Architectural Historians
Organization Robinson & Associates, Inc. date 1/30/03
street & number 1909 Q Street, NW Third Floor telephone 202/234-2333
city or town Washington state DC zip code 20009

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name See forthcoming list.
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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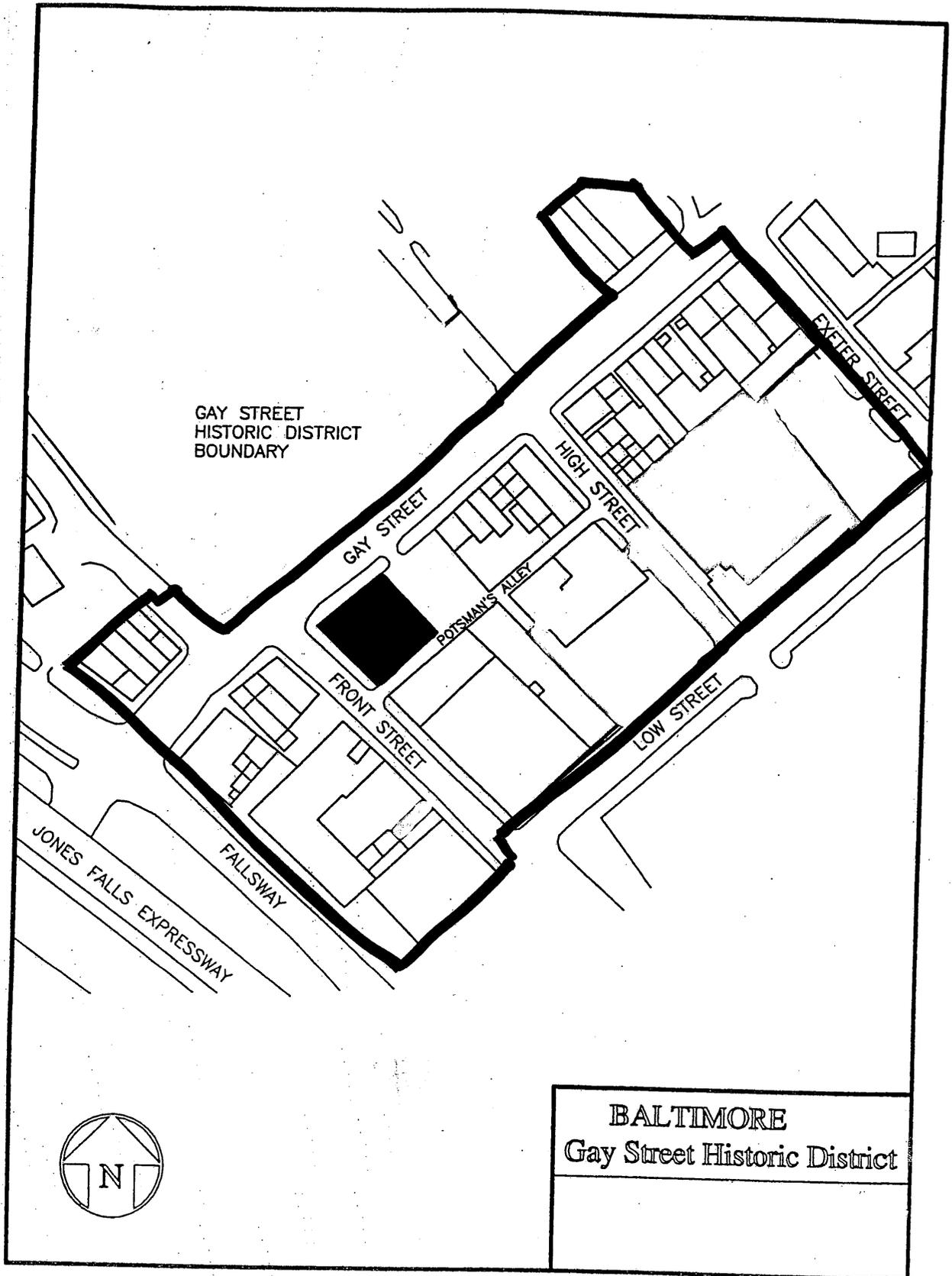
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Verbal Boundary Description:

Refer to the map labeled "Gay Street Historic District Boundary" which accompanies this documentation. Beginning at the north corner of the Fallsway and Low Street, progress in a northwesterly direction to the rear property lines of the buildings fronting the 200 block of North Gay Street. Travel in a northeasterly direction until reaching North Gay Street. The buildings fronting the northwestern side of the 200 block of North Gay Street are included within the historic district and the boundary extends to the rear property line of each building. After crossing North Front Street, progress to the road bed of North Gay Street and move to the end of the block and cross North High Street. Continue along the road bed until reaching 358 North Gay Street and progress to the rear property line of the building, continuing until reaching the intersection of the Orleans Street Viaduct and North Exeter Street. Move in a southeasterly direction, crossing North Gay Street and progress until reaching the corner of North Exeter and Low streets. Turn and progress in a southwesterly direction until reaching the Fallsway.

Boundary Justification:

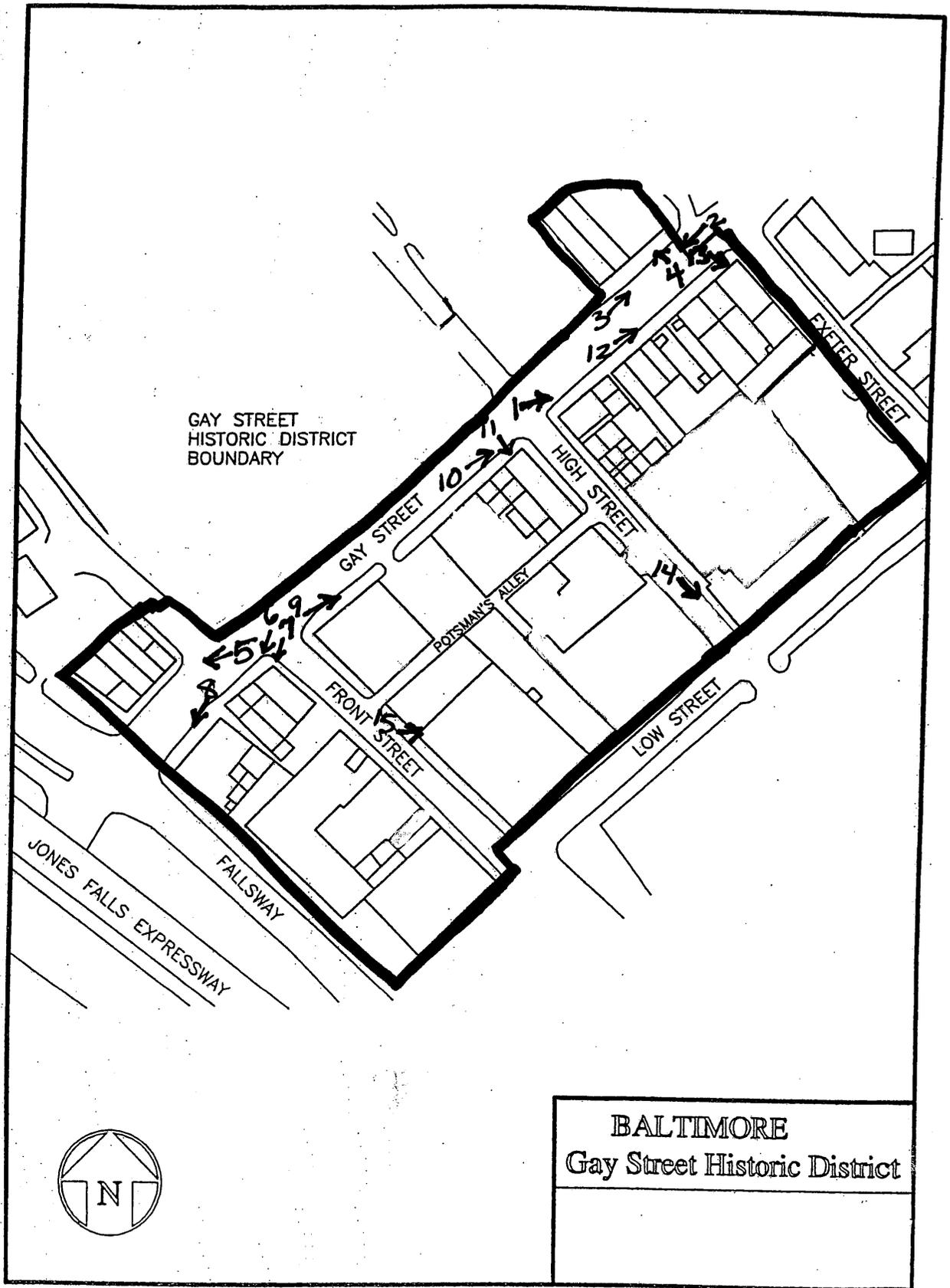
The Gay Street Historic District is bounded by the Fallsway on the southwest, Low Street on the southeast, Exeter Street on the northeast, and the extant historic buildings and street line on the northwestern side of Gay Street. The boundaries of the Gay Street Historic District were evaluated based on several factors. The district includes a distinct area with a high concentration of late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings with high degrees of integrity. Although the Gay Street Historic District is part of a larger area known as Old Town, other areas of greater Old Town have suffered numerous architectural intrusions and a loss of integrity, and research indicates that the blocks included in the Gay Street Historic District contain the highest concentration of buildings from the period of significance. Furthermore, the Orleans Street Viaduct, constructed in 1934, visually separates the Gay Street Historic District from the original large parcel of Old Town and forms a logical eastern boundary, much as the Fallsway separates the western edge of the district from downtown Baltimore.



GAY STREET
HISTORIC DISTRICT
BOUNDARY

BALTIMORE
Gay Street Historic District

 Noncontributing Resource



GAY STREET
HISTORIC DISTRICT
BOUNDARY

BALTIMORE
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Key to Photographs