

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received AUG 14 1985  
date entered SEP 25 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Bel Air Armory

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number North Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Bel Air N/A vicinity of First Congressional District

state Maryland code 024 county Harford code 025

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name State of Maryland, Military Department Contact: Col. Raymond Clift  
728-3388 X244

street & number Bolton and Hoffman Streets

city, town Baltimore N/A vicinity of state Maryland 21201

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harford County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Bel Air state Maryland 21014

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Maryland Historical Trust  
Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

# 7. Description

HA-1429

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<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 <u>      N/A      </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Bel Air Armory is on the east side of Main Street at 41 North Main in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. Closely resembling a castle or the U.S. Corps of Engineers insignia, this building, like others built at the same time around the state, is unmistakably an armory. The complex consists of the armory, which faces west on Main Street and its truck park and garages on the rear of the lot. Constructed in 1915 of Port Deposit granite, the building consists of the main block, five bays by three, two stories over a raised basement, and the field house to the east (rear) of the main block. The front elevation is strongly divided into five bays by the two projecting hexagonal towers which rise to three stories and are topped by crenelated battlements finished in stone coping. A stone water course sharply delineates the first story from the raised basement in both the main block and the towers which provides horizontal movement in the facade. This horizontal movement is reinforced by the corbelled table just under the crenelated battlements which top the main block. This level in the towers is a repetition of the stone water course supported by brackets. The block's fenestration shows a balance between horizontal and vertical thrust. The long, narrow windows are rather deeply set in with the tower windows being narrower than those of the main block in the first and second stories. The tower windows in the third story are mere slits. All the windows but the composite window in the second story of the center bay have stone sills and flat arches which halt the upward emphasis of the windows. The triple window in the middle bay in the second story has a segmental stone arch. This window is echoed in the projecting stone marquee over the double doors of the entry. Two flagpoles project from this marquee flanking the letters MNG (Maryland National Guard). Two additional flag poles rise from the battlements along the inside of the towers. The battlements, corbel strip, and water course continue around the building on the north and south elevations.

Behind the main block is the field house. Seven buttresses divide the side elevations (north and south) into bays all but the first (west) of which have two long narrow windows with stone sills and flat arches. The water course continues along the side elevations and, since the lot slopes fairly sharply, basement windows of increasing depth occur. This portion of the building has the curved roof of a field house. The rear (east) elevation of the building, here two full stories high, is plastered. Two pair of buttresses support the ends of this elevation. A small window is placed between the buttresses in the second story (first story from the Main Street side) and a door occurs in the first (or basement) story. Between the buttresses pairs centered is a tall double door with a sally port set in a round arched opening. This door is big enough to drive a small truck in. A long window set in a round-arched opening is on each side of the entry. A stone wall with buttresses continues from the east end of the north elevation to the end of the lot. At right angles to this wall and parallel with Main Street are the garages of the truck park. A wire mesh fence with stone piers completes the fencing of the lot.

The interior is in three sections. The west block has three floors of offices. The towers above that are accessible but not functional. The middle block is the field house which has a basketball court and a stage at the east end. The basketball court has been used in the past for drill. In the basement of this section are a day-room, class-rooms, kitchen facilities, and the armory - a secure storage facility for the company's weapons. Behind the field house, but under the same roof section, are more offices upstairs and down.

# 8. Significance

HA-1429

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1946	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

<b>Specific dates</b>	1915	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Architect: John B. Hamme Contractor: Lawrence Whalen & Co.
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**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**      Applicable Criteria: A, C.  
Applicable Exceptions: none  
Level of Significance: state

The Bel Air Maryland Armory is primarily significant for its association with the reorganization and expansion of the National Guard system in the twentieth century. It derives additional significance from its role as a social center for its community, a function it has served continuously since its construction date. Architecturally, the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of its type, including a T shaped plan with a two story front "head house" section and a one-story perpendicular "drill hall" extending to the rear; its facade is detailed to recall Medieval fortifications, with towers flanking the central entrance, crenellated parapets, and strip buttresses.

The Bel Air Armory, strikingly reminiscent of the U.S. Corps of Engineers insignia or a Scottish Gothic Revival castle, was the subject of a design competition during the first year of the Great European War. The winning design was by John B. Hamme of York Pennsylvania. The same design was subsequently used for the now demolished Edgewood Armory. The contract was let in November 1914 to Lawrence Whalen and Company with subsidiary contracts to Love Brothers and J. Nathan Dean of Bel Air. The lot on Main Street was purchased for \$2,600 from Aquilla B. Whitaker and Josephine M. Whitaker in March 1915. The stones for the foundation were obtained when the stone fence around the Van Bibber property on South Main Street was demolished. The granite for the building came from the Port Deposit Granite Company. This building is Bel Air's first and only armory and is still used by the local National Guard unit.

So divided were the Harford Countians before the Civil War that illicit units. pro and anti-Union, drilled in the county. Many men went South to fight for the Confederacy, while the county put companies C & H in the Seventh Regiment of U.S. Volunteers in the field under the command of Colonel Edwin H. Webster of Bel Air.

In 1877 a National Meeting of Militia Officers met in Richmond, Virginia, to form the National Guard Association to lobby for a better National Melitia. The New York Militia was the first to borrow the name National Guard from the French. Soon it became universal. In the 1880s and 1890s most states reorganized their National Guards, moved, some scholars say, by the wave of labor violence that periodically swept the nation between 1877 and the end of the century as labor attempted to organize for better wages and working conditions.

In Bel Air the Jackson Guards, a company of around 80 men, was formed in 1887. It was named for Governor Elihu Jackson. The next year (1888) the Jackson Guards became Company D. First Maryland Regiment Infantry. The company met to drill and spend a week encamped with the rest of the Maryland National Guard.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

HA-1429

See Continuation Sheet No. 3

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.48 acres

Quadrangle name Bel Air, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	8	3	8	3	9	6	0	4	3	7	7	0	9	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title M. Larew, architectural Historian

organization Town of Bel Air date revised: 29 January 1979  
7/85

street & number 39 Hickory Avenue telephone (301) 838-8700

city or town Bel Air state Maryland 21014

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *J. Mi. Ah* date 8-14-85

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

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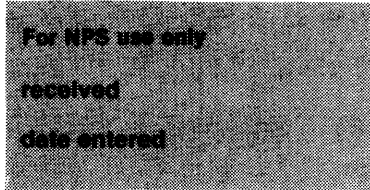
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

See Continuation Sheet for listing date  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date  
Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Bel Air Armory Harford County, Maryland Item number 8 Page 1

In 1894 Company D was used to help break the United Mine Workers' strike in the western Maryland coal fields. Because of the use of the Militia, Union organizing ceased in western Maryland until 1899.

Company D was in federal service during the Spanish-American War but saw no combat. On April 25, 1898, the company marched down to the train station where it took the Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad to Pimlico, outside Baltimore. The men camped there for two days before being sent to Fortress Monroe, Virginia, near Norfolk, for garrison duty. Later that summer (August 5) they were shipped to Puerto Rico, again for garrison duty, because the island had been secured (August 12) about the time they got there.

After the beginning of the Great War in Europe the preparedness campaign waged by interventionists like former President Theodore Roosevelt and former Army Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood brought further improvements. In Maryland several new armories, including the one at Bel Air, were built.

In the latter part of 1915 Bel Air's Company D was mobilized and sent to El Paso, Texas, as part of the campaign against Pancho Villa. The company was led by Major Robert Archer.

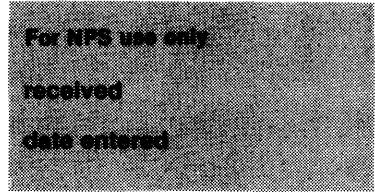
On August 5, 1917, the unit was mustered into federal service as Company D, 115th Infantry Regiment, 58th Brigade of the 29th Division. Under command of Major General Charles G. Norton, the division was sent to Camp McClellan, near Anniston, Alabama, in August 1917. It spent ten months there in training before being shipped to France. Altogether 1,000 Harford County men and 10 Harford County women served in the Allied Expeditionary Force in France. This includes enlistees, draftees, and the men of Company D. Of this number, forty-five lost their lives. They are remembered on the plaque placed in front of the armory after the War.

Company D was called to federal service again on February 3, 1941. The troops were quartered in the armory for two weeks before being sent to Fort Meade for further training. Bel Air's General Reckford was in charge of training with broomsticks and stove pipes in place of rifles and mortars. The unit took part in the giant maneuvers in North and South Carolina in the latter part of the year, and were passing through Virginia in convoy back to Fort Meade on December 7 when work came of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Company D was sent immediately to Philadelphia to guard railroad lines and utilities.

When first called to active duty the 29th Division was still a "square" division of two infantry brigades of two regiments each. In March, 1942, the division was "triangularized." The brigade structure disappeared and the division obtained the organization it would carry throughout World War II - three infantry regiments, the 176th, the 116th and the 115th with support

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**Continuation sheet** Bel Air Armory Harford County, Maryland **Item number** 8 and 10 **Page** 2

units such as artillery, engineers, medics, and military police. Company D was in the First Battalion, 115th Infantry Regiment. (The 115th included the Maryland Troops. The 116th was from Virginia.) It was still a heavy weapons unit armed with machine guns and mortars. At the close of World War II, the entire division received the Croix de Guerre with palm; the First Battalion of the 115th (and Company D) received the Croix de Guerre with Silver Star for defense against the German counterattack near the Bois de Bretel, Normandy, July 11, 1944.

The Bel Air Armory has a long history as a local community gathering place. The town high schools have long held plays and seasonal dances in the auditorium and graduations were held there until the Bel Air High School built its own auditorium. The city's professional Ramsey Street players perform at the Armory and the annual town minstrel show is held there. In addition the Armory has housed local community services on long-term bases over the years, such as the Red Cross and the Harford County Library.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Verbal Boundary Description: In the town of Bel Air in said Harford County:

BEGINNING for the same at a point in the Northeasterly side of Main Street at the distance of forty-one feet measured along the said northeasterly side of said Main Street in a southeasterly direction, from the corner or angle formed by intersection of the northeasterly side of said street with the southeasterly side of Howard Street, said point of beginning being also at a stone set at the end of the third or south forty-eight degrees forty-five minutes west one hundred and seventy-two feet line of that tract of land conveyed by A.B. Whitaker and others to Francis H. Iglehart, by Deed dated January 8th, 1902, and recorded among the Land Records of Harford County aforesaid, in Liber WSF No. 104, folio 6, and running thence with the lines of said conveyance, reversely and magnetically to date, two courses, viz: (1) North forty-nine degrees thirty minutes east, one hundred and seventy-two feet to a stone, (2) north thirty-three degrees twenty-five minutes west forty-one feet to a stone set in the southeasterly side of said Howard Street, at the end of the first line of the lot conveyed to said Iglehart as aforesaid, and thence with and binding on the southeasterly side of said Howard Street, North forty-nine degrees thirty minutes east twenty feet to a stone now set, thence leaving said street and running for division across the Whitaker land two courses, viz: (1) south forty-three degrees forty minutes east one hundred and forty-one feet to a stone now set; (2) south forty-nine degrees thirty minutes west two hundred feet to a stone now set up on the northeasterly side of said Main Street, and thence with and binding on the north-easterly side of said street, north forty-three degrees twenty minutes west one hundred feet to the beginning: containing forty-eight one hundredth acres of land, more or less.

Boundary Justification: the nominated property comprises the total parcel historically associated with the resource.

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received

date entered

Bel Air Armory

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

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- Vertical files, Harford County Library, Bel Air.
- (Belair) Aegis, Centennial edition, August 1, 1974.