

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 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 process, or computer, to complete all items.

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1. Name of Property

historic name Stieff Silver Company Factory  
other names Kirk-Stieff Silver Company Factory, B-3990

2. Location

street & number 800 Wyman Park Drive  not for publication  
city or town Baltimore  vicinity  
state Maryland code MD County Independent city code 510 zip code 21211

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] 5-30-00  
Signature of certifying office/Title 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 office/Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. State/Federal Agency 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] 6/30/00  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Stieff Silver Company Factory  
Name of Property

Baltimore city, Maryland  
County and State

**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	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	0	Total

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

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION:  
manufacturing facility  
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: industrial

foundation BRICK  
walls BRICK  
STONE: limestone  
roof OTHER: built-up  
other N/A

**Narrative Description**

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

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Stieff Silver Company Factory

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## SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Stieff Silver Company Factory is a 2 story rectangular brick factory building built in two stages in 1925 and 1929. It occupies a triangular landscaped site bordered by Wyman Park Drive, Pacific Street, and Falls Road in Baltimore's Hampden neighborhood. The building features a large lighted sign flanking a central clock that rises above a parapeted roof. The steel framed building has punched windows containing metal industrial sash; brick detailing includes beltcourses and simplified pilasters with capitals. In 1971 a low two-story addition was added to the west of the building.<sup>1</sup> Additional interior changes took place in 1979 and 1988, and no machinery remains. Despite these changes, the Stieff Silver Company Factory retains its historic architectural character, appearing much as it did in the 1930s.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Stieff Silver Company Factory, built in 1925 and 1929, stands on a triangular site bordered by Wyman Park Drive and Pacific Street and sloping away sharply to the Falls Road in Baltimore's Hampden neighborhood. The building, which faces south, stands behind a metal rod fence with brick piers and two gateways that access a semicircular drive entering and leaving from Wyman Park Drive. The site's original landscape features have been altered by road widenings, new construction and a recent paved parking lot. The 2 story, 9 bay tapestry-brick industrial building has a rectangular footprint with a frontage of approximately 124 feet facing southeast onto Wyman Park Drive and approximately 70 feet facing northeast onto Pacific Street. Because the site slopes down toward the Jones Falls Valley to the northwest, the building stands 3 stories in the rear. A large lighted sign spelling out "Stieff Silver" surmounts the roof parapet and dominates the facade, flanking a central clock that emphasizes the entrance below. In 1971 a large, low 2-story brick addition was built adjoining the western wall of the Stieff Silver Company Factory to house expanded manufacturing and distribution.

The 2 story building was constructed in two stages, the 1<sup>st</sup> story completed in 1925 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> story in 1929. The south, east and west facades are detailed; the rear facade is secondary and faced with common brick. Brick pilasters divide the bilaterally symmetrical facade into 9 bays on the south (front) facade facing Wyman Park Drive; the building is 6 bays deep. The building has a water table trimmed with limestone and a limestone beltcourse separates the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. Square limestone insets are centered within simplified corbelled capitals atop the pilasters at each floor, while layered pilasters emphasize the corner and central bays and continue through to the limestone coping that surmounts the high parapet. Centered above the parapet is a semicircular limestone surround containing a clock face supported by bound fronds carved in relief as might be found in one of the trophies the factory produced. Signage consisting of large metal letters bearing light bulbs extends across the width of the facade on either side of the clock. The common-brick rear (north) facade is of

<sup>1</sup> The long axis of the building lies at an angle of approximately 40° from true east-west; for simplicity in this National Register Nomination its northwest facade will be described as its north facade, its northeast facade as its east facade, its southeast facade as its south facade, and its southwest facade as its west facade.

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simpler design than the other facades. At the rear a corbelled brick cornice above simple piers remains above the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor rear facade is undifferentiated.

Each of the factory's window openings has stack-bonded bricks at its head and a limestone sill at its foot. The openings contain industrial steel sash windows of 4 by 9 lights on the north and south facades and 4 by 6 lights on the east and west facades. In each window the top and bottom rows of lights are inward-opening projected units while the central sash is fixed. The top rows of lights of the south, east, and west facade windows contain panes of stained glass. A copper-valanced glass-paned canopy protects the central 1<sup>st</sup> floor entrance. A secondary pedestrian entrance, originally the loading bay, occupies the east facade. The north (rear) facade contains a garage entrance at the basement level.

The interior of the Stieff Silver Company Factory consists of open plan space on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor with a walk-in vault in the center of the rear portion of the floor. The exposed structural system consists of steel columns supporting steel beams below wooden floor joists. Most finishes and partitions date to late 20<sup>th</sup> century modifications. The rear interior partitions, the central staircase to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, and the rear elevator date to the 1988 remodeling that created the factory outlet store in the western end of the building.<sup>2</sup> Recent office space occupies the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The basement contains a garage, boiler room, compressor room and vault.

The two-story 1971 brick addition attaches to the Stieff Silver Company Factory's west side, extending a blank wall to the west toward Jones Falls. The addition's front facade line stands forward from the front of the Stieff Silver Company Factory by approximately 30 feet, providing space for a loading bay on the addition's east wall. Despite its size, the addition does not affect the overall integrity of the Stieff Silver Company Factory. The addition's lower height and simple profile and design subordinate the addition to the earlier building. The topography sloping to Jones Falls in the west and the vegetation that blocks the view of the addition from the north and west further minimize the impact of the addition on the 1925-1929 Stieff Silver Company Building.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Herman C. Engel, 21 October 1999.

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### 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 as 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)

INDUSTRY

#### Period of Significance

1925-1941

#### Significant Dates

1925 initial construction

1929 second story added

1941 closed for WWII

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Pietsch, Theodore Wells, architect

### 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:

Baltimore Museum of Industry

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Stieff Silver Company Factory, constructed in 1925 and 1929, represents a significant reminder of the silver industry in Baltimore. The Stieff Silver Company was the last of the Baltimore silverware manufacturers, operating between 1892 and 1999, and during much of its existence was one of two nationally-prominent silver makers in Maryland. The Stieff Silver Company Factory meets National Register Criterion A because of its association with the evolution of Baltimore's silver industry. The period of significance of the Stieff Silver Company Factory is 1925 to 1941, the year the building was closed prior to conversion to WWII manufacturing. The 2 story Stieff Silver Company Factory is largely unchanged from 1929 and retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic association despite a 1969-71 brick addition, which remains low and generally obscured from the public way by trees.

## HISTORY

Silverware manufacturing was an important segment of Baltimore's late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial milieu. Baltimore silver was nationally known and the city drew on a local craft tradition dating to the immigrants who had brought silversmithing skills and tastes from Britain in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Baltimore's first important manufacturer, Samuel Kirk, founded his firm in 1815 and introduced repoussé, a relief technique. Silver items with often elaborate designs pressed into the surface from the reverse side characterized what came to be known across the country as "Baltimore Silver."<sup>3</sup>

The founder of the Stieff Silver Company, Charles Clinton Stieff (1861-1923), belonged to a family of piano makers. Stieff was the youngest son of John Lewis Stieff, who operated the Stieff Piano Company. John Stieff's father Charles M. Stieff had immigrated from Germany and taught music in Baltimore, beginning to import pianos in 1835. John Stieff took part in the California Gold Rush and moved the piano company into manufacturing upon his return. The younger Charles Stieff did not continue in his family's business but established himself as the southern distributor for the International Silver Company of Meriden, Connecticut. As a jobber, he made use of Baltimore's rail connections to bring in silverware that he would sell to retailers and hotels. Just as his family's piano firm had shifted from importing into manufacturing, Charles C. Stieff shifted into silver production by buying the Baltimore Sterling Silver Company, founded in 1892.<sup>4</sup> After Stieff bought out his partner in the firm<sup>5</sup> he incorporated the operation as the Stieff Silver Company in 1904. Though new to the business, Charles Stieff promoted reform of silver purity regulations; he was instrumental in the

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Sopher, "A Sterling Past: A History of the Kirk-Stieff Silver Company," 10 May 1995, 2. Jennifer F. Goldsborough, *Silver in Maryland* (Baltimore: Museum and Library of the Maryland Historical Society, 1983), 13.

<sup>4</sup> "Business Hall of Fame," [ca. 1980s].

<sup>5</sup> Telephone conversation with Charles C. Stieff II, former Executive Vice President of the Stieff Silver Company, 8 November 1999.

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drive for the Maryland Sterling Silver Laws, which required any piece labeled “sterling” to contain 92.5% silver.<sup>6</sup> The company set up its workshop in a building in Cider Alley near German (now Redwood) Street in downtown Baltimore, selling its wares directly to consumers through a single Stieff retail store at 17 North Liberty Street.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike the silver of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Stieff’s wares appealed directly to the middle class. More people were able to buy silver: incomes were rising, manufacturing costs were dropping, and silver prices were falling almost continually during the three decades after 1872 as western silver mines opened.<sup>8</sup> Silver, as with pianos, was becoming a mass-market commodity, and the Stieff Silver Company capitalized on the 19<sup>th</sup> c. tendency to signal social status through consumption. The firm appealed directly to consumers, advertising its wares in newspapers beginning by 1900,<sup>9</sup> setting itself apart from the older Samuel Kirk & Sons, which did not advertise until 1911.<sup>10</sup>

Expanding rules of entertaining and etiquette also called for a greater variety of silverware than in previous decades. By delivering a meal from a side table *à la russe*, servants allowed the dining table to contain more ornament and each dish to be presented on its own. New foods such as oysters and asparagus and luxury foods such as fresh salads, butter, and ice cream required their own specific utensils.<sup>11</sup> Baltimore’s repoussé technique lent itself to the reigning late 19<sup>th</sup> c. aesthetic, allowing extensive decoration of utensils and serving pieces.<sup>12</sup>

In 1924-25 under the leadership of Gideon N. Stieff (d.1970), who had taken over from his father Charles in 1914, the company built its one story building at 800 Wyman Park Drive in the Hampden section of Baltimore. The building was designed by Theodore Wells Pietsch<sup>13</sup> (1868-1930), Chicago-born architect of a number of Baltimore buildings including Eastern Female High School (1904), the Baltimore American Building (1904), U.S. Fidelity & Guaranty Building (1906), the Broadway Recreation Pier, the Fish Market (with Simonson), the Southern Hotel (1916, with Simonson), the Tindeco and American Tobacco Co. plants, the Elephant House in Druid Hill Park Zoo (1926), and Ss. Philip and James Roman Catholic Church and Rectory (1928).<sup>14</sup> Pietsch was trained highly and studied architecture at MIT from 1885 to 1889, working afterward in the office of

<sup>6</sup> Sopher, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Rodney G. Stieff, “Brief History of Stieff” (1979), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Charles L. Venable, *Silver in America 1840-1940: A Century of Splendor* (New York: Dallas Museum of Art, distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 123.

<sup>9</sup> Rodney G. Stieff, “Brief History of Stieff” (1979), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Donna M. Ellis, Samuel Kirk & Son, Inc. Papers Finding Aid, MS. 2720 (Maryland Historical Society, April 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Venable, 128, 134-5.

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer F. Goldsborough, *Silver in Maryland* (Baltimore: Museum and Library of the Maryland Historical Society, 1983), 12-14.

<sup>13</sup> “Theodore Wells Pietsch,” *Tercentenary History of Maryland* (Chicago and Baltimore, S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1925), 11:495. It is not clear whether Pietsch designed the building’s second floor.

<sup>14</sup> Theodore Wells Pietsch file, Maryland Historical Trust.

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Burnham & Root. Pietsch continued at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from 1892 to 1898, later writing in the *Architectural Record* on "The Superiority of the French trained Architect."<sup>15</sup> After working in the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, Pietsch set up his Baltimore practice following the Great Fire of 1904, forming a partnership with Otto Simonson between 1905 and ca. 1908.<sup>16</sup>

Employing about 30 people,<sup>17</sup> many of whom would live in Hampden,<sup>18</sup> the new Stieff Silver Company plant expanded the firm's production capacity over its earlier workshop. In 1928-29 the company grew again by adding a second floor. A company advertisement invited the public to visit "One of Baltimore's Show Places" and touted the firm's growth:

The demands for Stieff Silver have grown to exceed its production, hence, brick and stone and steel in the NEW STIEFF FACTORY assume structural size and capacity where 30,000 square feet of floor space amid splendid environments in a factory which will accommodate the trained and experienced silver craftsmen and multiply Stieff Silver Products 100 per cent [*sic*].<sup>19</sup>

Though the factory stands south of a cluster of 19<sup>th</sup> century mills and mill housing, it reflects the decentralization of industry that took place in Baltimore in the 1920s. The Industrial Factory Site Commission had published maps of potential Baltimore sites in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that many plants followed in the 1920s.<sup>20</sup> Stieff's older competitor, Samuel Kirk & Son, also built a new manufacturing and wholesale facility at the same time as the Stieff Silver Company less than 1.5 miles to the east at 25<sup>th</sup> Street and Taylor St. (now Kirk Ave).<sup>21</sup>

The Stieff Silver Company sited their plant facing Wyman Park Drive, a winding parkway landscape of lawns and trees envisioned in the Olmsted Brothers' plans for green space in the city's annexed northern land in the early 1900s.<sup>22</sup> This distinctly aestheticized suburban environment evoked freedom, spaciousness, and a modern harmony with nature. Gideon Stieff and the architect Theodore Pietsch both lived in Roland Park, the Olmsted Brothers' late 19<sup>th</sup> c. suburb to the north of Hampden,<sup>23</sup> and the Stieff Silver Company's own landscaping, now altered by road widenings and new construction, linked the plant with the adjacent parkway land. As later company board chairman Rodney Stieff wrote:

<sup>15</sup> Theodore Wells Pietsch, "The Superiority of the French trained Architect," *Architectural Record* 25 (February 1909): 110-114.

<sup>16</sup> Theodore Wells Pietsch file, Maryland Historical Trust.

<sup>17</sup> Telephone conversation with Charles C. Stieff II, 8 November 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Herman C. Engel, factory caretaker and longtime Stieff diemaker, 12 November 1999.

<sup>19</sup> "Visit the Stieff Factory" [advertisement], *Baltimore 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* (1929).

<sup>20</sup> Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 304-5.

<sup>21</sup> Ellis.

<sup>22</sup> Olson, 254-5.

<sup>23</sup> Telephone conversation with Rodney G. Stieff, former Chairman of the Board of the Stieff Silver Company, 4 November 1999. Theodore Wells Pietsch file, Maryland Historical Trust.



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The grounds, shrubbery and flowers around the plant blended with the surrounding park territory, for it was the company's firm belief that a high quality material such as sterling silver should be produced in a setting of the same beauty and perfection. In other words, the home of the product appealed to the public as well as the product itself.<sup>24</sup>

The Stieff Silver Company Factory's landscape once featured a semicircular driveway and paved pathways accented by hedges and trees. Foundation plantings lined the building. To the west of the building was a circular fishpond with a sculptural fountain flanked by benches, and a bust of founder Charles C. Stieff stood at the building's entrance.<sup>25</sup> While the landscaping has been altered by road widenings, overgrowth and new construction, the setting and the building itself remain.

By the 1920s the manufacture of silverware still resembled the workshop system that had reached its technological peak in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at the time that Stieff founded the company. Apprentices learned their trades from experienced workers.<sup>26</sup> Silvermaking did not lend itself to mass production, requiring instead batch production by skilled workers of products that had great variety and some degree of customization. To increase plant production a manufacturer would add workers rather than mechanize.<sup>27</sup> In addition the repoussé silver styles that remained popular in Maryland called for hand work that prevented the mechanization that was taking place elsewhere.<sup>28</sup>

The Stieff Silver Company factory used two main processes to work the silver bars, sheets, circles and solder that that the firm of Handy & Harmon supplied to the factory's central vault.<sup>29</sup> The first process produced flatware including the knives, forks, and spoons that comprised the bulk of the Stieff Silver Company's production. A sheet of silver would be cut into blanks corresponding to the shape of the utensils it was to become; a blank was placed individually on a die while a powerful drop hammer stamped an opposite die down from above. The drop hammers stood in a row on wooden piers above concrete pads, each operated by a single person. Some pieces required more than one stamping for greater detail.<sup>30</sup>

Holloware, including vessels such as bowls, tea sets, cups, and specially-made trophies, occupied a smaller portion of the firm's production and required different materials and techniques. Holloware was essentially hand-made, with even the motorized spinning process involving much hand work.<sup>31</sup> A circle of silver, rotating on a horizontal shaft in a spinning lathe, was pulled up gradually around a standard chuck. The "spinner" used

<sup>24</sup> Rodney G. Stieff, "Brief History of Stieff" (1979), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Herman C. Engel, factory caretaker and former diemaker for Stieff Silver Company, 12 November 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 5E.

<sup>27</sup> Venable, 74.

<sup>28</sup> Goldsborough, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Telephone conversation with Rodney G. Stieff, 4 November 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Telephone conversation with Robert Johnston, former Vice President of Marketing at Stieff Silver Company and silver specialist, 3 November 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Telephone conversation with Rodney G. Stieff, 4 November 1999.

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a long tool held under the armpit and leveraged against a peg that could be moved as the piece progressed. "Chasers" then handled any repoussé work, which required first pushing designs into the surface of the vessel from the back and then filling the vessel with pitch to allow hammering of details on the front. Some handles, feet and other elements were cast from silver ingots and attached; silversmiths and engravers also added designs to the pieces.

The machines in the Stieff Silver Company factory were driven by an overhead belt system run from electric motors. Handheld torches served to anneal the silverware: once a piece of silver had been worked for some time, any further work required that it be returned to its original malleability by heating it, a task later performed by annealing furnaces with conveyor belts.<sup>32</sup>

The plant's location adjacent to the Falls Road as it ran northward lent itself to efficient supply and distribution by truck, with the silver products being shipped to local Stieff stores as well as national distributors. The plant at Wyman Park also served as one of the firm's stores<sup>33</sup> and was accessible to Baltimore residents in the rapidly-developing northern suburbs. In addition to the original store on Liberty Street, a second store opened in downtown at 229 North Howard Street in the mid 1930s and became the main retail store. Stieff Silver also expanded into a national retailer, parceling out distributorships in different regions. By 1941 Stieff products were being sold in 400 retail stores located in most of the large cities in the U.S. and several abroad.<sup>34</sup>

World economic and political events affected the company over the decade after the factory was built. Demand dropped during the Depression, and the company busied employees with painting and cleaning the building in order to retain skilled workers.<sup>35</sup> During WWII silver became scarce as the War Production Board regulated industry closely, controlling wages and hours, and rationing raw materials including silver. In 1941<sup>36</sup> the Stieff Silver Company began converting the factory to make electronic assemblies, radar parts, surgical instruments and other items. The plant continued to produce silverware only in small amounts, returning to silver manufacturing full time in 1946.<sup>37</sup>

The Stieff Silver Company was the object of local pride as a successful and familiar home-grown industry.<sup>38</sup> During the Christmas season its rooftop sign, visible from 29<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, bore red and green lights instead of the customary white. The firm also gained recognition for its special products, including the annual trophies for the Preakness Stakes. The trophies are some of the best-known prizes in horse racing and are half-scale replicas of Tiffany & Company's 1860 Woodlawn Vase. First Lady Mamie Eisenhower toured the plant during

<sup>32</sup> Telephone conversation with Herman C. Engel, 12 November 1999.

<sup>33</sup> "Visit the Stieff Factory" [advertisement], *Baltimore 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* (1929).

<sup>34</sup> Rodney G. Stieff, "Brief History of Stieff" (1979), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Frederick N. Rasmussen, "Baltimore losing its Stieff Silver lining," *Baltimore Sun* (7 November 1998): 2E.

<sup>36</sup> Telephone conversations with Rodney G. Stieff, 4 November 1999 and Charles C. Stieff II, 8 November 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Rodney G. Stieff, "Brief History of Stieff" (1979), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Kelly, "Flowers on the flatware gave Baltimore a sterling reputation," *Baltimore Sun* (19 January 1997).

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a visit to Baltimore and selected items for herself. The firm also created a set of presentation goblets for President and Mrs. Ford and a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary silverware set for James Cardinal Gibbons.<sup>39</sup>

Between WWII and the closing of the plant in 1999 many changes in the silverware industry took place: Stieff became the largest national player in the pewter reproductions market and shifted its focus to giftware based on a license granted by Colonial Williamsburg in 1939. Other foundations granting licenses to Stieff included Historic Newport, Old Sturbridge Village, and the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>40</sup> By the late 1960s the Stieff Silver Company held 25% of the national pewter market. This growth required expansion, and the 50,000 square foot addition to the west, known as the Gideon N. Stieff, Sr. Building, was finished in 1971. As the suburbs grew after WWII Stieff closed its downtown stores and opened stores in shopping centers around Baltimore, selling giftware along with traditional silverware. The company acquired other silver and pewter makers including the Schofield Company, Maryland's third-ranked silver company, in 1967, and Samuel Kirk & Sons in 1979. Kirk was the Stieff Silver Company's main Maryland competition and the oldest silversmith in the country. The merged companies were renamed Kirk-Stieff and the Stieff Silver Company factory was altered to accommodate Kirk workers and machinery.<sup>41</sup>

During the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the silver industry was in decline, most visibly during the price uncertainty surrounding the 1979 silver bullion price bubble. Rodney Stieff recalled prices rising from \$3-\$5 per ounce to \$45-\$48 per ounce within a year of January 1979, causing Baltimoreans to line up around the factory to sell their family silver.<sup>42</sup> Long-term changes in marriage and entertaining customs also reduced the demand for silverware. By 1988, corporate sales made up 25-30% of the firm's annual sales, with pewter products comprising about 40% of sales.<sup>43</sup> At this time the firm was buying 200,000 to 250,000 ounces of silver

<sup>39</sup> Rasmussen.

<sup>40</sup> Sopher, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Rodney G. Stieff, "Brief History of Stieff" (1979), 3-5. Funds for the Kirk purchase had come from the sale of the Stieff retail stores to Gordon Jewelers.

<sup>42</sup> Sopher, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Jesse Glasgow, "Kirk Stieff weathers cloudy times by making its own silver lining," *Baltimore Sun* (12 October 1988): 16B, 17B.

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Stieff Silver Company Factory

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annually.<sup>44</sup> In 1988 Kirk Stieff installed a factory outlet in the plant to sell overstocks and factory seconds; in 1993 Brown-Forman bought the Stieff Silver Company as part of its Lenox division, which moved production to Rhode Island and closed the factory early in 1999.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Dudley C. Snyder, "Kirk Stieff adapts products to times," *Baltimore Evening Sun* (29 August 1988).

<sup>45</sup> Linell Smith, "Putting away the Silver," *Baltimore Sun* (14 January 1999): 1E.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 2.6 acres

**UTM References** Baltimore West, MD USGS quad  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1 8	3 5 9 6 3 0	4 3 5 3 2 2 0	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
2				4			

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 Scott Meacham  
organization Betty Bird & Associates date November 1999  
street & number 2607 24<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 3 telephone (202) 588-9033  
city or town Washington state DC zip code 20008

**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 \_\_\_\_\_  
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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## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description

The Stieff Silver Company Factory is situated on a triangular lot bordered by Wyman Park Drive, the Falls Road and Pacific Street. Wyman Park Drive forms the southeast boundary. The Falls Road forms part of the western boundary, along with the northern portion of the boundary set 65 ft. from the Falls Road. Pacific Street forms the northeast boundary of the property, along with the western section of the boundary set 163 ft. from Pacific Street, as described more fully in the metes and bounds description found in the land records of Baltimore City Liber 5827, page 046.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary corresponds with the legal description of the property and encompasses the full extent of the Stieff Silver Company Factory site.