

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SUPER PRIDE MARKETS (Midtown Edmondson Historic District)

HABS No. MD-1449

Location: 2000 West Lafayette Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland

2000 West Lafayette Avenue is located at latitude: 39.299216, longitude: -76.650567. The coordinates represent the approximate center of the building and were obtained in 2023 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Significance: The building at 2020 West Lafayette Avenue was constructed ca. 1971 as a warehouse on the site originally occupied by the Lafayette Mill and Lumber Company from 1899 to 1931. By 1975, the building became one of three new locations for Super Pride Markets, established to address the lack of grocery stores within Baltimore's Black communities. Super Pride was established by Black businessman Charles Thurgood Burns, who owned a majority share in its parent company, Community Foods, Inc., with the remaining shares owned by Black stockholders. The West Lafayette Avenue store, the largest Black-owned and operated supermarket in Baltimore and the second largest in the nation, provided a training program and job opportunities for local residents. Facing growing competition from national chains, Super Pride suspended operations in 2000.

Description: 2000 West Lafayette Avenue is a one-story, irregularly shaped concrete block commercial building with a brick façade laid in stretcher bond. The main section of the building is rectangular with a flat membrane roof and a central projecting entrance beneath a metal standing seam pent roof. The northern portion of the entrance section is enclosed; the southern portion is open and is supported on four steel columns. Mounted on the top of the pent roof are three blank sign boxes consisting of an oval flanked by two rectangular boxes.

The façade primarily consists of large storefront window openings, which have been covered up, either with plywood or with brick infill. The southern end of the façade, which consists of a door flanked by two large windows, has a lower roofline than the rest of the building. As indicated by the Sanborn maps, this section post-dates 1982.¹

There is an enclosed flat-roofed loading dock on the southwest corner of the building, two small concrete block additions on the rear (west) elevation, and one small concrete block addition on the north side elevation. According to the

¹ Sanborn Map Company, Baltimore Maryland, 1971, 1974, and 1982, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Collection of Environmental Data Resources.

Sanborn maps, these additions all post-date 1982.²

History: On the 1901 and 1914 Sanborn maps, the site is shown as containing the Lafayette Mill and Lumber Company.³ This company was incorporated on September 11, 1899.⁴ Within two weeks, it had purchased “the northwest corner of Lafayette avenue and Brice street, 327 feet 9 inches by 201 feet, for \$10,000 to use it as a lumber yard for the Lafayette Mill and Lumber Company” and applied to the city to construct a two-story lumber shed at that location.⁵ According to plans submitted to the city’s Department of Buildings, the shed was to be 20' x 30', 16' high.⁶ In February 1907, the company made plans to build a two-story office building and brick warehouse that would jointly cover 24'-3" by 72'.⁷ The 1901 Sanborn map shows the Lafayette Mill and Lumber Company using the lot mainly for stacking lumber of various heights. The 1914 Sanborn map shows that the main parts of the Lafayette Mill facility, including a mill building and sheds, were located on the property of 2000 West Lafayette Avenue, with lumber yard facilities, railroad sidings and platforms north of Mosher Street in the property that was later the site of the 2020 Mosher Street warehouse.⁸

In 1929, a petition was filed in the Circuit Court to appoint a receiver for the Lafayette Mill and Lumber Company, when its president, Charles H. Cromwell, was seriously ill. According to the press coverage, the company’s stockholders and directors wanted “the business closed out under jurisdiction of the court.”⁹ In 1931, the receivers held an auction of the company’s equipment, with notice that “immediately thereafter” the property would be sold.¹⁰ The site was cleared of structures by 1938, after numerous fires.¹¹

² Ibid.

³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland, Vol. 2, 1901, Image 46, Map 153, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573190102/?sp=46&st=image&r=-0.5,-0.09,2.001,0.932,0; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland, Vol. 2, 1914, Image 60, Map 159, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573191402/?sp=60&st=image&r=-0.518,-0.079,2.035,1.589,0, both accessed 7 January 2024.

⁴ “Lafayette Mill and Lumber Co.,” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 12 September 1899, 7, accessed 04 March 2023.

⁵ “A New Lumber Yard,” *The Sun*, 20 September 1899, 10, accessed 04 March 2023; “City Council,” *The Sun*, 26 September 1899, 10, accessed 04 March 2023.

⁶ “Miscellaneous,” *The Sun*, 5 October 1899, 4, accessed 04 March 2023.

⁷ “In Suburbs and County,” *The Sun*, 16 February 1907, 9 accessed 04 March 2023.

⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland, Vol. 2, 1901, Image 46, Map 153, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573190102/?sp=46&st=image&r=-0.5,-0.09,2.001,0.932,0; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland, Vol. 2, 1914, Image 60, Map 159, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573191402/?sp=60&st=image&r=-0.518,-0.079,2.035,1.589,0, both accessed 7 January 2024.

⁹ “Lumber Firm Placed in Hands of Receivers,” *The Sun*, 7 August 1929, 26, accessed 04 March 2023.

¹⁰ Classified Advertisement, *The Sun*, 20 May 1931, 25 accessed 12 December 2022.

¹¹ U.S. Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), “1937-38 Baltimore City & Baltimore County,” Aerial Image, 1:20,000, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agricultural and Stabilization and Conservation Service, 14 February 1953, cited in Elizabeth Fagan, “Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Review Form B-5296, Warehouse at 2020 Mosher Street,” 11 September 2015 (updated 4 April 2016), 4.

The 1950 and 1952 Sanborn maps show the property as vacant.¹² The current building is first shown on the 1971 Sanborn map; however, it is unclear how the building was used during the first few years. The 1975 city telephone directory lists the South Carroll Contracting Co., Inc. as the occupant of the property.¹³ Super Pride Markets, which occupied the building for most of the late twentieth century, did not move to the property until 1975 when the company expanded its operation by establishing three new locations, including 2000 West Lafayette Avenue.¹⁴

Charles Thurgood Burns established the Super Pride Markets company to address the need for grocery stores in Baltimore's Black neighborhoods, because other grocery stores had left the city.¹⁵ Burns took over the bankrupt Super Jet Market on East Chase Street in Baltimore and renamed the business Super Pride Markets. Super Pride Markets was owned by Community Foods, Inc., a corporation consisting of 435 Black stockholders, with Mr. Burns owning 60% of the stock.¹⁶ The company was able to succeed and grow despite the "refusal of some food companies to do business with a Black-owned store."¹⁷

In the early 1970s, Super Pride Markets, described in *The Evening Sun* as "the largest [B]lack-owned and operated supermarket in the city," initiated a federally funded training program for future employees of grocery stores. Students spent part of their twelve-week program working at the Super Pride Markets at Chase Street and Patterson Park Avenue. At the end of the program, many of the students were hired by Super Pride Markets. The training program was supported by a federal grant that Charles Burns was instrumental in securing.¹⁸

Super Pride Markets' 1975 expansion, which included opening the 2000 West Lafayette Avenue store, increased its gross income, earning it recognition by

¹² Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland, Vol. 2, 1914 (updated December 1950), Image 82, Map 181, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195002/?sp=82&st=image&r=-1.15,-0.141,3.299,1.595,0, accessed 7 January 2024; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland, Vol. 2, Republished 1952, Image 28, Map 159, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195202/?sp=28&st=image&r=-0.06,0.415,0.377,0.249,0, both accessed 7 January 2024.

¹³ Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company of Baltimore City, *Annual Telephone Directory*, 1975, cited in *EDR-City Directory Abstract* (Shelton, Connecticut: Environmental Data Resources, Inc., 2019).

¹⁴ Jacques Kelly, "Ackneil Muldrow II," *The Baltimore Sun*, 6 November 2018, A8, www.newspapers.com, accessed 13 January 2023.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Welford L. McLellan, "U.S. Grant Enables Training People in Black Supermarket, Getting Them Jobs," *The Evening Sun* [Baltimore], 21 June 1973, www.newspapers.com, accessed 13 January 2023.

¹⁷ Eli Pousson, "Midtown Edmondson Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (draft), (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2015), 8-32.

¹⁸ McLellan, "U.S. Grant Enables Training."

Black Enterprise magazine as the second largest Black-owned food retailer in the United States and one of the 100 most profitable Black-owned businesses.¹⁹

According to local press stories, the West Lafayette Avenue store suffered from ongoing problems with robberies. In March 1976, only four months after the store opened, it was robbed for the fourth time.²⁰

By 1990, Super Pride Markets had seven locations, employed over 400 people, and grossed over \$43 million in annual sales. In addition to its training program, the company sponsored Black History Month activities and supported the Arena Players, a Black community theatre. By the late 1990s, however, the company had financial problems, primarily due to competition from national chains and due to the city's shrinking population.²¹ In 2000, all Super Pride Markets closed.²²

The 2002 *Stewart Directory* lists the occupants of 2000 West Lafayette Avenue as both the Super Pride Markets and Food City; however, by that time, Super Pride Markets would not have been in operation.²³ In December 2009, the building was offered for sale at a public auction.²⁴ A 2010 directory lists both The Bridge Marketplace and New 2000 Lafayette LLC, and a 2014 directory lists Food City.²⁵ At the time of the survey, the building was vacant and there were faded signs on the property for both Food City and Bridge Marketplace.

Sources: “3 here among top 100 black firms.” *The Sun* [Baltimore], 11 June 1976. <https://www.newspapers.com/>, accessed 13 January 2023.

Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company of Baltimore City. *Annual Telephone Directory, 1975*, cited in *EDR-City Directory Abstract*. Shelton, Connecticut: Environmental Data Resources, Inc., 2019.

“City Council.” *The Sun*, 26 September 1899. <https://www.newspapers.com/>, accessed 04 March 2023.

¹⁹ Wayne Wickham, “3 Here Among Top 100 Black Firms,” *The Sun*, 11 June 1976, 13, www.newspapers.com, accessed 13 January 2023.

²⁰ “Store Hit Thrice Since Opening,” *The Sun*, 7 January 1976, www.newspapers.com, accessed 13 January 2023; Roger Twigg, “Stakeout Misses Market Holdup; 2 suspects Held,” *The Sun*, 31 March 1976; 42, accessed 13 January 2023.

²¹ Pousson, “Midtown Edmondson Historic District,” 8-32.

²² Laurie Willis, “New Supermarket Restocks Hopes,” *The Sun*, 14, February 2002, B3, www.newspapers.com, accessed 13 January 2023.

²³ *Stewart Directory*, 2002, cited in *EDR-City Directory Abstract* (Shelton, Connecticut: Environmental Data Resources, Inc., 2019).

²⁴ Classified Advertisement, *The Baltimore Sun*, 13 December 2009, L12, <https://www.newspapers.com/>, accessed 12 December 2022.

²⁵ *EDR Digital Archive*, cited in *EDR-City Directory Abstract* (Shelton, Connecticut: Environmental Data Resources, Inc., 2019).

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- _____. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 2, 1914 (updated December 1950), Image 60,

Map 159.

https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195002/?sp=60&st=image&r=-0.263,-0.335,1.421,1.109,0.

____. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 2, 1914 (updated 1952), Image 50, Map 181.

https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195202/?sp=50&st=image&r=-0.96,-0.038,2.921,1.412,0, all accessed 7 January 2024.

Sanborn Map Company. Baltimore, Maryland, 1971, 1974, 1982. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps." Collection of Environmental Data Resources, Inc.

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Historians: Nancy L. Zerbe, Steven Patrick, ARCH², Inc., 2023.

Project

Information: The documentation of 2000 West Lafayette Avenue was undertaken in 2022-2023 as mitigation in accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for the Frederick Douglass Tunnel Program, formerly the Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Tunnel Replacement Program. 2000 West Lafayette Avenue will be demolished to make way for construction of the South Ventilation Facility and the realignment of the Northeast Corridor associated with a new 1.9-mile-long tunnel north of the existing tunnel alignment. The documentation project was sponsored by the United States Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the National Railroad Passenger Corporation

(Amtrak), in coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust. It was prepared by Nancy L. Zerbe, Principal Investigator, and Steven Patrick, Historian. Renee Bieretz prepared the large-format photography. Christopher H. Marston, HAER Architect, advised the project.