

VLR - 11/15/99
NHHP - 12/9/99

**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 or 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 an 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: A. Smith Bowman Distillery (029-5014)
Other names/site number: Wiehle Town Hall, Sunset Hills (029-0014-0002)

2. Location

Street & Number: 1875 Old Reston Avenue and Sunset Hills Road [N/A] Not for Publication
City or town: Reston [] Vicinity
State: Virginia Code: VA County: Fairfax Code: 059 Zip Code: 22070

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

 10/18/99
Signature of certifying official/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 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 Date of Action

A. Smith Bowman Distillery

Fairfax County, VA

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private
- Public-Local
- Public-State
- Public-Federal

Category of Property

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

No. Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>

Name of related 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)

AGRICULTURE/Processing: Distillery

GOVERNMENT/ Town Hall

RELIGIOUS/ Church

DOMESTIC/Single-Family Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/ Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Stone

walls: Brick

roof: Metal

other: Cornice: Wood

Lintels: Brick

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheet

A. Smith Bowman Distillery
Name of Property

Fairfax County, VA
County and State

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 patterns of our history.

B Property is 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.)

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.)

See continuation sheet

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

ca. 1892-1949

Significant Dates

ca. 1892

1934

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Dr. C.A. Max Wiehle

A. Smith Bowman, Sr.

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

A. Smith Bowman Distillery
Name of Property

Fairfax County, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

previously listed in the NR

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # 172

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of add. data:

State SHPO office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References: USGS Map Scale 1:24 000

1 /18/ /296100/ /4314500/
Zone

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The A. Smith Bowman Distillery is located on a 14, 141 Square Ft. lot at Sunset Hills Road and Old Reston Avenue in Reston, Fairfax County, Virginia. The parcel is described as 5-B and can be found in Deed Book 6291, page 1730. The property's coordinates are: S 89°35'08" W, N 28°51'53" W, N 03° 12' 19" W, N 89° 35' 08" E, N 00° 24' 52" W.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The A. Smith Bowman Distillery, originally the Wiehle Town Hall, has been associated with this site since the town of Wiehle's development in the early 1890s.

See continuation sheet

A. Smith Bowman Distillery
Name of Property

Fairfax County, VA
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Laura H. Hughes and Simone M. Moffett, Architectural Historians
(Audrey Haugan, Volunteer for Prison Fellowship Ministries, provided historic context research)

Organization E.H.T. Tracerics Inc. Date July, 1999
Street & Number 5420 Western Avenue Telephone (301) 656-5283
City or Town Chevy Chase State Maryland Zip code 20815

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Four Seasons Development, LLC.- John Scira, President
street & number P.O. Box 8025 telephone (703) 736-9655
city or town Reston state VA zip code 20195

Paperwork Reduction Act 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 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 the Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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A. Smith Bowman Distillery, Fairfax County, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 1

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The A. Smith Bowman Distillery is a two-story brick building with a stone foundation. The ca. 1892 structure originally served two important functions for the town of Wiehle. The first floor was occupied as the Town Hall and the second floor as a church. The structure was eventually incorporated into the 7,200 acre farm known as Sunset Hills Farm. A. Smith Bowman, owner of Sunset Hills Farm, established a whiskey distillery on the farm in 1934 after Prohibition was repealed. The old Town Hall was used as part of the distillery's complex for storage and distilling of the "Virginia Gentleman" and "Fairfax County" brands of whiskey. The building's exterior has been painted white with the stone foundation rising to the water table level. The high-style Classical Revival building is designed with a simple, Greek Revival-influenced front gable. The window openings on the first story have been sealed and a number of the window openings on the second story have been sealed as well. The interior of the building was altered in the 1930s to allow for the installation of the distilling vats and stills. Large runways, designed of simple wood planks, were situated between the vats and stills to allow easy movement of the huge whiskey barrels. The distillery has been vacated for a number of years and the building has become overgrown with vines and other vegetation. The paint has begun to peel away from the exterior brick in a number of sections and the window sashes and frames have begun to deteriorate. Small cracks are evident in a number of areas on the exterior, but the interior layout for the distillery processes is still intact.

Site Description

The Bowman Distillery is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Old Reston Avenue and Sunset Hills Road. The building is located immediately off the street and is surrounded by a small, overgrown yard. The property is part of a thirty acre complex that includes the original Wiehle/Bowman Mansion and the Bowman Distillery complex. The Bowman Distillery is vacant and the site and building have become deteriorated. The surrounding neighborhood represents a mix of small-scale residential and large office complexes.

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A. Smith Bowman Distillery, Fairfax County, Virginia

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Exterior Description

The main façade, facing south toward Sunset Hills Road, is three bays wide with a central entranceway. The two-story brick building has a front semi-pedimented gable and a small circular louvered window opening in the center. The stone foundation rises to the water table level and the ends of wood joists from the distillery flooring are visible at the water table level. The brick is laid in American bond with its course having a row of headers and seven rows of stretchers. The two first-story window openings were casement windows with one-over-one lights. The window openings have been bricked up from the interior and the sash and frame are severely damaged. The window openings have wood sills and brick segmental arched lintels and are an excellent example from the Late-Victorian era. The second story has two window openings, each with solid wood shutters and wood sills. There are no window sashes or framing visible in the second story openings. The cornice's design is influenced by the Greek Revival. The cornice has a wide, but simple frieze, and extends across the side facades. The low pitched gable has a wide band of trim that discontinues across the gable end. The main entranceway appears to have been altered from its original design. The brickwork framing the doorway is different and the entranceway appears to have been wider at one time. The doorhead is a simple wood beam and a segmental arch is located four brick courses above the beam. This section of the brickwork and arch have not been fully painted. The main doorway is located directly above the water table. The stone foundation is not painted in this area and a small opening is located directly beneath the main doorway. This opening is encased with a wood frame and a metal grill covers the opening.

The west (side) elevation of the Bowman Distillery, which faces Old Reston Avenue, is four bays wide. The first story has four one-over-one casement windows, matching the window designs on the first story of the main elevation. The stone foundation continues around the corner from the main elevation until the first window opening on the southwest section of the west elevation. A small, bricked-up opening is located directly below the first story, southwest window opening. The stone foundation begins again on the other side of this small opening and continues until it reaches the next bay. A second small, bricked-up opening is located directly underneath the first story opening. The stone foundation begins once again, but it is unclear if the pattern continues. The overgrown condition of the northern sections of the side elevation makes the water table level inaccessible. The exposed wood joist ends continue its pattern across the side elevation.

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Each opening on the side elevation has a segmental arched lintel and a wood sill. The window openings on the second floor have louvered shutters. The roofline extends over the building and the simple cornice supports the projecting eave.

The rear elevation has only three openings on its facade. The second story has two window openings, the one to the east is bricked up and the one to the west has a solid wood shutter. The bricked-up opening has its wood sill intact and a segmental arched lintel. The wood sill and segmental arched lintel of the shuttered opening remains intact. The paint on the bricks along the opening's edge no longer exists, exposing the brickwork to the elements. The single opening on the first story is located on the west side of the rear elevation. The opening has been bricked up and extends to the ground. The opening on the first floor is wider than the second story openings, suggesting that the opening could have originally been an entrance way. The stone foundation is not visible on this side of the building and the brickwork located below the water table level is exposed in a number of areas. The gable's design on the main facade is repeated at the rear elevation.

The east (side) elevation faces the landscaped area of the Bowman Distillery site. The east side is four bays wide with its window openings nearly identical to the west side. The east elevation has a doorway located at the northwest section of the first story. All of the first story openings have been sealed and the second story openings have exterior louvered shutters in their closed position. The stone foundation that is visible from the main elevation extends around the southeast corner and is visible until the first window opening on the south section of the side elevation. A small, bricked up opening with a segmental arched lintel is located directly under the first story window opening. The stone foundation ceases at this section and brickwork is visible across the remaining area of the east elevation.

The exterior of the Bowman Distillery is simple in design with simple ornamentation. The design of the building's exterior includes the Greek Revival-influenced gabled roof and the Late-Victorian Era window frames and sashes with segmental arched lintels.

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A. Smith Bowman Distillery, Fairfax County, Virginia

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Interior Description

The building's interior reflects its alteration as a distillery warehouse in the 1930s and is utilitarian in design. Void of any ornamentation that may have been associated with the building's pre-1930 history, exposed beams are located throughout both floors of the distillery. Despite the neglect of the building over the years, the interior has suffered little damage and remains in moderate condition. Each section of beams are designed to hold large whiskey barrels and are located along the walls of the distillery. The center aisles of the building have wide 'runways' that were constructed of wood planks stretch across the length of the building. This allowed the distillers to 'roll' the barrels to any part of the building.

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A. Smith Bowman Distillery, Fairfax County, Virginia

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Originally known as the Wiehle Town Hall, the A. Smith Bowman Distillery in western Fairfax County has served as the focal point for the surrounding community since its construction in circa 1892. As originally erected, the first floor of the building was used as the town hall, while the second floor served as the Wiehle Methodist Episcopal Church. The building was designed and constructed under the direction of Dr. C.A. Max Wiehle, who, in 1886, purchased 3,228 acres of land 18 miles west of Washington, D.C. Dr. Wiehle envisioned the vast farmland as a self-sufficient community that would provide about 800 homes for 4000 residents. A town planner and surveyor were hired to begin the subdivision process, which resulted in the town of Wiehle, the sixth incorporated town in Fairfax County. Supported by the labor of local residents, family-held companies were formed to produce bricks, cut and market timber, manufacture and mill building materials, and sell the newly subdivided lots. Following the 1901 death of its planner, the town of Wiehle began to flounder. The town hall ceased to function as such in 1909, serving until 1927 as a single-family dwelling and specialty store. In 1927, A. Smith Bowman purchased the town, engaging its small population in fox hunts and the only legal whiskey distillery in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The first Master of the Fox Hounds, Bowman founded the first hunt in Fairfax County, and established the Aesculapian Hotel as the site of hunt breakfasts and balls frequented by many Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia socialites. In 1934, with the repeal of Prohibition, the former town hall was renovated to serve as a distillery, where large oak barrels of bourbon and whiskey were aged for months at a time. The 80-pound bell and steeple, which denoted the building's original use as a church, were removed from the roof of the structure as local residents did not believe it proper for a building associated with the production of alcohol to look like a religious edifice. The two-story Classical Revival style brick building continued to serve as the A. Smith Bowman Distillery until the 1950s. Set upon a random-coursed stone foundation, the seven-course brick building has a high-style Classical Revival entablature with ogee-molded returns, bed molding, raked frieze, and overhanging boxed cornice. The segmentally arched openings, filled with two-light casement windows secured by louvered shutters, are finished with wood sills, brick lintels, and stylized astragal casings. The interior of the building documents its use as a distillery with vats, stills, and large runways constructed of wood planks to move the whiskey barrels.

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The A. Smith Bowman Distillery documents the establishment of the town of Wiehle as envisioned by Dr. C.A. Max Wiehle for the period between circa 1892 and 1909, when the building served as the town hall and church. From 1934 to the 1950s, the Classical Revival style structure functioned as the A. Smith Bowman Distillery, the only legal whiskey distillery in Virginia. Therefore, the Bowman Distillery is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, B, and C, for the period between circa 1892 and 1949 with architecture and industry as the areas of significance.

Origins and establishment of the Town of Wiehle, Sunset Hills and Reston

Early Land Grants

Sunset Hills sits on land that can be traced back to the original "Northern Neck Proprietary", granted in 1649 by King Charles II to seven of his loyal followers. Eventually Thomas, 6th Lord Fairfax came to acquire this land and, in 1765, he granted a 12,588 acre tract to his nephew Bryan, later 8th Lord Fairfax. The land remained in the Fairfax family until 1852, when it was sold to Benjamin Thornton. For over thirty years, the railroad station on the Loudon and Hampshire Railway was known as Thornton Station. In 1886, a portion of this land was conveyed to Dr. Carl Adolph Max Wiehle.

Wiehle Ownership

In 1886, Dr. C. A. Max Wiehle, a Philadelphia physician, retired at age 41 and purchased 3,228 acres of land located 18 miles from the nation's capital. Dr. Wiehle, a gentleman with a "respectable fortune", intended to establish a planned community, complete with parks, green spaces, scenic lakes, houses separated from industry, and self-sustaining local businesses. He imported a town planner from his native Germany, then hired surveyor Joseph Berry in 1892 to draw up a plan for the new town of Wiehle. A family-held company, the Virginia Lumber and Manufacturing Company, was set up in 1893 and its various corporations began to cut and market timber, manufacture window frames and wagon spokes made from logs on the property, and produce bricks at its brick kiln. The brick, lumber and millwork furnished construction materials for the town buildings. The Maryland and Serpentine and Talc Company of Baltimore

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A. Smith Bowman Distillery, Fairfax County, Virginia

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built a mill that became the nucleus of one of the industrial component of the community. One of the family-held corporations also set about selling real estate lots.

Dr. Wiehle had envisioned about 800 homes for 4000 residents in his new town, which in 1898 became the 6th incorporated town in Fairfax County. Only ten lots were sold and built on, with four of the lots purchased by John Sherwood for his daughters when they married. In 1901, Dr. Wiehle succumbed to pneumonia at age 54. One of the ten homes, the Robert Wiehle House, was listed on the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites in 1977.

The Town of Wiehle

In 1887, Dr. Wiehle persuaded the Federal government to change the post office address in town from Thornton's Mills to the name of Wiehle. The Town of Wiehle began to take shape with the arrival of a city planner from Germany who created a modified grid pattern for the new town. The center of the town of Wiehle was to be located at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Psotta Avenue, the current location of the Reston North Golf Course. The streets for the town of Wiehle were chosen by Dr. Wiehle and included the names of American cities, European cities, and the names of his family members. Edmund Avenue, Louis Avenue, Max Avenue, Coligny Avenue and Herbert Avenue were named for his children and Psotta Avenue was named for his wife's family. Dr. Wiehle was intimately involved with the creation of the town of Wiehle and his influence was evident in most matters of the town's establishment.

Dr. Wiehle commissioned the construction of his summer home, designed with "gables, chimneys, porches, stairways and lattice work."¹ Three lakes were constructed on the property and each were drained every spring to be cleaned and then refilled. A brick icehouse, the largest icehouse for miles around, was constructed in 1888 on the Big Lake dam. The structure could accommodate the storage of a large amount of ice that would be cut each winter from the dammed water. The cutting of the ice was a huge event in the town of Wiehle, and the Wiehle family would travel from Washington, DC to attend the ceremonies.

The Aesculapian, a large summer hotel that attracted a number of visitors from the Washington, D.C. area, was located in Wiehle. Situated adjacent to the Wiehle mansion and property, the

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Aesculapian was originally designed for use as a sanitarium and located near the springs on the property. The hotel was a popular destination and was always filled to capacity.

A town charter was formally granted by the Virginia General Assembly for the town of Wiehle in 1898. Wiehle became the sixth incorporated town in Fairfax County and its powers included the power to tax dog owners and lay out and maintain the town sidewalks. In 1899, Washington architect Erskin M. Sunderland, designed a 25-room mansion for the Wiehle family. The large, 2 ½-story brick mansion was constructed on the hill above the railroad and three man-made lakes. The brickwork was laid in American (common) bond.²

The town of Wiehle, located 18 miles from the nation's capital, had easy access to a railroad and had a number of small industrial companies. The railroad had originally been laid in 1857 at the Thornton's Mills (later Wiehle) stop. Passenger service was available for the first time in 1860 and after a disruption of service during the Civil War and a change of ownership, resumed under the name of the Washington & Ohio Railroad Company. The railroad ownership underwent a number of changes and by 1900, the terminus of the railroad was reached with the completion of the line between Snickersville in Loudoun County and Alexandria. The numerous lots of land available for housing in the town of Wiehle were not purchased or developed, despite the companies and railroad available to potential residents. At the turn of the century, a small, one-story, one-room school was erected to serve the Wiehle children. The population of Wiehle had remained relatively small with approximately 50 people having settled in Wiehle by 1900. Dr. Wiehle died in 1901, and plans for the expansion of the town of Wiehle began to flounder.

The Wiehle Methodist Episcopal Church, built upon land that was donated by Mrs. Wiehle in honor of her deceased husband, was completed in 1907. The town envisioned by Dr. Wiehle never flourished and by 1909, the Wiehle heirs and the Virginia Lumber and Manufacturing Company decided to sell their land to Dr. Hugh Hutchison and William Crighton of Herndon.

Hutchison Ownership

Dr. Hugh Hutchison was interested in local land speculation and large scale farming, following a nationwide interest in scientific farming. Concurrently fertilizers and manure doubled the

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productive value of farmlands, increasing populations in both Baltimore and Washington made dairy and poultry farming lucrative, and the continued expansion of the railroads, enabled farmers to reach cities to sell milk and produce.³ Hutchison and Crighton deeded their land to the Cuthbert Land and Development Company. The company charter described the goals and purposes to: "subdivide real estate, mine, erect buildings and to aid or induce the construction and operation of institutions, establishments, plants which in the judgment of the directors of this company will enhance the value of the real or personal estates or promote the health, happiness or well-being of those living on its property, or engaged in enterprises conducted thereon or in proximity therto."⁴

Dr. Hutchison and his family lived in the "Big House", which is what the former Wiehle mansion began to be called locally.

The period from 1908 through 1919 was a very productive time for the Hutchison farms. Timber continued to be cut, about 500 acres were cleared for cultivation, and cows and poultry were raised. A number of farm buildings were constructed at this time including a 200 cow dairy barn, a 2000 hen poultry plant, horse barns and residences for tenants. Although the timber business was still profitable, increasingly the dairy business began to take precedence over the lumber business. Most local people changed jobs to work in the dairy operations.

During Hutchison's ownership of the Wiehle property, the Town Hall was occupied as a residence by Eldred Thompson. Mr. Thompson ran a general store on the first floor of the building and his family lived upstairs. Mr. Thompson's daughter Madeline contracted the Spanish Flu in 1918 and the home and general store were quarantined. Madeline recalled ice skating by bonfire light on a large pond, sunning on the shore in the summer, and attending parties thrown by Dr. Hutchison where big bands played in the gazebo built above the old spring house.⁵

In 1923, the name of the post office was changed to Sunset Hills at the request of Dr. Hutchison. It is speculated that the ailing Dr. Hutchison wanted the name changed to appeal to future investors. In the summer of 1924, Dr Hutchison died at the age of 54 during an ocean trip intended to improve his health. His body was sent home to Wiehle and he was buried in

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Herndon, Virginia.

Dr. Hutchison's heirs decided not to break up the property, and prepared an illustrated widely circulated brochure describing the land and its resources. Sunset Hills was then the largest estate of its kind in the Washington area. The brochure suggested possible uses of the estate; a large private school, sanitarium, suburban development, or a club interested in agricultural development, outdoor life, or a game preserve. There were photos of the bungalows of the farm, poultry, cattle; a 1000 hen laying house; a 4-room dairy house with modern refrigeration and ice-making machine, a horse barn, and a saw and planing mill. The property was also advertised in various newspapers, including the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, which is the paper in which A. Smith Bowman learned of the sale.

Bowman Ownership

In 1927, Kentucky-born A. Smith Bowman purchased the entire former Wiehle property from the heirs of the second resident, Hugh Hutchison. The mansion house became the Bowman family residence, and was renamed Sunset Hills. At that time, most of Fairfax County was almost exclusively farmland. In 1929, Bowman founded the first hunt in Fairfax County. Bowman was the first Master of the Fox Hounds, and his land became the home of the Fairfax Hunt, with the old Aesculapian Hotel the site of hunt breakfasts and balls. Jackie Bouvier (later Kennedy) and General George Patton rode at various times with the Fairfax Hunt.

The day after Prohibition was repealed in 1934, Bowman established the A. Smith Bowman Distillery. He shifted many of his farm workers and tenant farmers at Sunset Hills into distillery work and utilized many of the old Wiehle structures for the distillery and warehouses. Grain grown on the farm was used to make bourbon whiskey, sold under the names of "Virginia Gentleman" and "Fairfax County." In 1937, the first shipment of the bourbon left the Bowman Warehouse. The historic structure that had originally served as the Wiehle Town Hall was converted for use as a distillery warehouse. It was at that time that the steeple of the building was removed from the structure as a response to local residents' complaints. They did not think it proper for a building associated with the production of alcohol to look like a religious edifice. Oak barrels, made from trees on the farm, aged the bourbon for approximately four years. The

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second-story floor of the old Town Hall was removed to create a system of strong oak beams that supported the many heavy barrels of liquor. Corn, bourbon's principal ingredient, was grown right on the farm, and the high-protein, nutrient-rich spent mash was fed to its cows. Whereas the lumber mill of Dr. Wiehle had provided most of the jobs for the residents of Wiehle and the dairy business of Dr. Hutchinson had busied Sunset Hills residents, the liquor business engaged most of the residents of the town.

Sunset Hills, which had been enlarged in 1947 to 7,200 acres following the purchase of the former 3,140 acre Dunn Tract south of the railroad track, was one of the largest parcels of privately-owned land near a metropolitan city in the US. This only occurred because the heirs of all the previous owners chose to sell the land almost completely intact, without subdivision. The huge parcel, probably the most prime real estate in Fairfax County and certainly the largest privately held tract of land in northern Virginia, went on the market in 1960. Lefcourt Realty, briefly owned the land and distillery, until the 60-acre distillery site returned to the late A. Smith Bowman's sons, A. Smith Jr. and Delong.

Robert E. Simon Development

The rest of the Bowman estate, for sale once again, was ripe for another man of vision to follow Dr. Wiehle. Robert E. Simon, of New York, was that man. He bought 6750 acres from Lefcourt and proceeded to implement his vision of a satellite town to Washington, D.C., with preserved green and open space, clustered housing, pathways, light industry, and in general a wisely planned community without the blight of suburban sprawl. The town was named Reston using his initials R.E.S.

Today Reston is a fully developed community, one of the few remaining successful ventures of the new town movement of the 1960s. It is, as planned, a mixture of commercial and residential uses – garden apartments, townhouses and detached dwellings. At its core, however, is the nucleus of the old Sunset Hills Farm, reminding the new town residents of an old town, and of a rural life style that had its antecedents in seventeenth century royal land grants.

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The Wiehle Town Hall/Church/Bowman Distillery

The 2-story, gabled roof, brick building known as the Wiehle Town Hall was constructed ca. 1892. Historically, the first floor of the building served as the Town Hall, and the only town church, Wiehle Methodist Episcopal Church, occupied spaces on the second floor until 1907.⁶ A church steeple with an 80-pound bell sat atop the roof. From 1918-1924, Mr. Eldred Thompson ran a general store on the first floor and his family lived upstairs. The Thompson daughter contracted the Spanish Flu in December 1918, and the building and all its perishable stock, including candy ordered for the holiday season, had to be quarantined.⁷

The distillery warehouse was abandoned during the late 1950s, supplanted by huge corrugated steel warehouses that could house over a million gallons of bourbon for aging. In 1987, the A. Smith Bowman Distillery moved its operations to Spotsylvania County, and the distillery warehouse was given to the Greater Reston Arts Center in 1986.⁸ The remaining acreage from the distillery complex (31 acres) was sold to Galbreath-Ruffin Corp., a development company that built a large office building on the property.

Dr. Carl Adolph Max Wiehle (1846-1901)

Dr. C.A. M. Wiehle was born in Germany in 1846 and arrived in Philadelphia at the age of two. A son of a German Reformed minister, Wiehle graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and practiced medicine in Philadelphia. He settled his family in Washington, DC in 1881 and soon purchased over 3,000 acres of land in an area located north of the Washington, Ohio and Western Railroad tracks at Hunters Mill in the Dranesville District of Western Fairfax County. By 1888, Dr. Wiehle had increased his land holdings by another 300 acres. He built a summer home for his family in 1888 and his dream of creating a town from his holdings became a short-lived reality.

The hopes and dreams of the struggling new town of Wiehle were soon dashed with the death of its founder on February 23, 1901.⁹

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A. Smith Bowman Distillery, Fairfax County, Virginia

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A. Smith Bowman, Sr. and Jr.

A. Smith Bowman, Sr. was born in Mercer County, Kentucky in 1868. A graduate of Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, he established the People Motor Coach Company of Indianapolis in 1923. Reared in bluegrass horse country, he became an ardent horseman and foxhunter. With the sale of his company in Indianapolis, Bowman Sr. purchased Sunset Hills, a 4000-acre farm, for \$450,000 cash (c.\$112/acre) on September 30, 1927. He purchased an additional 3,000 acres later, creating the largest privately owned tract of land in the Washington, DC metro area. A. Smith Bowman, Sr. established the Bowman Distillery in 1934, producing the only legally distilled whiskey in Virginia. He established the Fairfax Hunt and was master of the hunt for a number of years. A. Smith Bowman Sr. died on June 27, 1952.¹⁰

A. Smith Bowman, Jr. was born in Lexington, Kentucky in 1906. The Bowman family moved to Sunset Hills in 1927, the same year that A. Smith, Jr. completed his undergraduate studies at Princeton University. He furthered his education at Harvard University's architecture program and practiced architecture for five years. After the establishment of the Bowman Distillery, A. Smith, Jr. returned home to Sunset Hills to assist his father and brother in running the family business. World War II led A. Smith, Jr. to join the Navy where he served in the Atlantic and Pacific regions, retiring as a lieutenant commander. After the war, he returned to Virginia once again and was in charge of sales for the Bowman Distillery. He was also a trustee of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and St. James School, a member of the Virginia Historic Landmark Commission, president of the Historical Society of Fairfax County and a governor of the Fairfax Hunt. A. Smith Bowman Jr. died in 1981 at the age of 75.¹¹

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Endnotes

¹ Louis Wiehle, Family Memoirs.

² Historic American Building Survey Inventory Form #171, page 2.

³ Netherton, p. 35

⁴ George Mason University Archives, Fairfax County Charter Book I, page 217.

⁵ Rosenberger, Ron. Interviewed by Audrey Haugan. Reston, Virginia, 1999.

⁶ A. Smith Bowman, Jr. "A History of Sunset Hills Farm," Historical Society of Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc.: Yearbook, Volume 6 (1958-59), p. 41.

⁷ Rosenberger, Ron. Interviewed by Audrey Haugan. Reston, Virginia, 1999.

⁸ Grossman, Mark. "Historic Building Turns Art Center," The Fairfax Journal, March 26, 1987.

⁹ A. Smith Bowman, Jr. "A History of Sunset Hills Farm," Historical Society of Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc.: Yearbook, Volume 6 (1958-59), p. 41-42.

¹⁰ "A. Smith Bowman, 84, Distiller of Bourbon and Sportsman, Dies," The Evening Star, June 28, 1952.

¹¹ Smith, J.Y. "A. Smith Bowman, Maker of 'Virginia Gentleman' Bourbon, Dies," The Washington Post, May 8, 1981.

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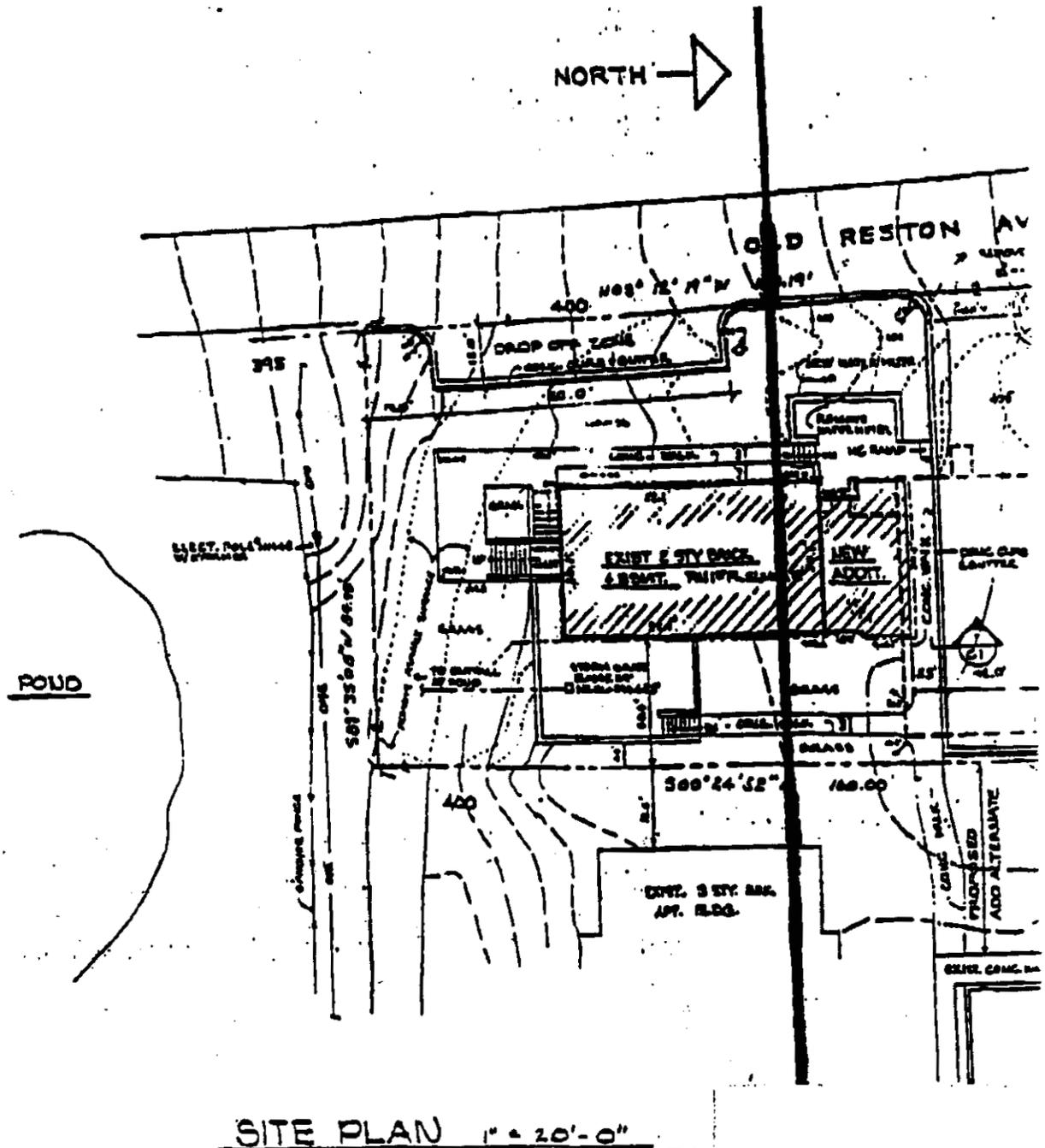
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A. Smith Distillery, Old Reston Avenue and Sunset Hills Road, Reston, Virginia

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A. Smith Byrum Distillery
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RESTON

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Fairfax

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LAKE FAIRFAX COLLEGE

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Powell
Building
Center

Pinecrest

Reston P.

Sugarland
Valley

Shiloh

AVENUE

COAST
OF RESTON

Summit Hill

WILSON

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