

**The Commission for Historical and Architectural
Preservation - Staff Report
November 13, 2007**



**Landmark Designation Report
Melvin Cade Armory
Baltimore, MD**

The Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) has the responsibility of recommending to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore the adoption of ordinances designating districts and landmarks within the limits of the City of Baltimore, having special historical, architectural, educational, cultural, social or community significance, interest, or value as Baltimore City Historic Districts or Landmarks, thereby necessitating their preservation and protection. In making its recommendation, the Commission shall give appropriate consideration to the following standards. In reaching its decision, the Commission shall clearly state which standards have been applied.

A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

1. dates from a particular period having a significant character, interest, or value, as part of the development, heritage, or culture of the City of Baltimore; or
2. is associated with the life of an outstanding historical person or persons; or
3. is the site of an historic event with a significant effect upon the cultural, political, economic, social, or historic heritage of the City of Baltimore; or
4. is significant of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction, or engineering, or is the notable work of a master builder, designer, engineer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or
5. contributes information of historical, cultural, or social importance relating to the heritage of the community; or
6. has yielded, or may be likely to yield, archeological information important in history or prehistory.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Melvin Cade Armory meets CHAP's standards for landmark designation one and three:

The Melvin Cade Armory meets standard one as the building mostly associated with the 128-year history of the African American units of the Maryland National Guard. In 1879 under the direction of Captain Thomas H. Lewis, former slaves and Union veterans among others organized themselves into the Monumental City Guard and were officially accepted as the First Separate Company, a separate Maryland National Guard regiment in 1882. In 1947, the First Separate Company became 231st Transportation Truck Battalion with three truck companies, the 147th, 165th and 726th Transportation Truck Companies. The 231st Transportation Truck Battalion became the only Maryland National Guard unit ordered to active duty to support the Korean War in 1950. As a matter of fact, the 726th Transportation Truck Company was the first United States National Guard unit to set foot in Korea in 1950.

The Melvin Cade Armory meets standard three as the building associated with the 231st Truck Battalion and their successful efforts to racially integrate the Maryland National Guard. On November 21, 1955, Major General Milton A. Reckord, the Adjutant General issued General Order Number 49 integrating the Maryland National Guard effective

December 1, 1955 only after a long, persistent campaign from the 231st Transportation Truck Battalion .



Building Description:

This one story brick structure, built in 1959, houses the 231st Truck Battalion, formerly an all African American Maryland National Guard unit. The building features a centrally located limestone front entrance trimmed with a simple door surround. Glass doors are recessed into the front entrance, and granite steps lead up to the main façade. Paired steel windows flank each side of the entrance while six single steel windows are grouped together with a limestone band. The building sits back from the street allowing for a landscape of a group of mature trees in the front . The interior holds a large drill-room which rises two stories in height and is fenestrated with upper level windows. A recruiting office and other meeting rooms are placed to the sides of the main entrance. Downstairs holds a kitchen and exercise areas.



Summary History: History written by Louis Diggs

Historically, the Melvin H. Cade Armory, initially named The Winchester Armory in Baltimore, Maryland, was the first military home built for African American Maryland National Guardsmen in 1959.

African Americans from the Baltimore and surrounding area caught the eye of the Maryland National Guard way back in 1882. This unit of African American officers and men in 1879 was a military club that competed with other like African American organizations. The organization called themselves “**The Monumental City Guard.**” They were actually formed on February 20, 1879. Some of the men that made up The Monumental City Guard were former slaves, and some were veterans of the Union Army’s all-Black Regiments that fought for the State of Maryland during the Civil War. They hoped one day of becoming Guardsmen in their home State of Maryland. The commander of the unit was Captain Thomas H. Lewis.

In 1882, The Monumental City Guard got the opportunity to demonstrate their military skills before the Adjutant General of the State of Maryland, Major General Hubbard. It was a cold day in 1882 when the African American men of the Monumental City Guard stood in the freezing wind, shivering in formation. Their blue uniforms were immaculate, brass had been polished and re-polished, their Civil War era muskets almost glowed, while the leather crossbelts of their haversacks and cartridge boxes smelled of the “blackballing” the men had religiously applied. As the Adjutant General approached

the formation, the unit presented arms and Captain Lewis reported. The inspection began.

According to the "Free State Guardian" in 1991, at first the soldiers performed the manual exercises, the "School of the Soldier," including stationary drill and individual loading and firing of their muskets. The men then demonstrated company battle drill, going from column into line, firing by platoon, ending with bayonet charge.

At the conclusion of the inspection, General Hubbard told Captain Lewis that he was extremely impressed with the company. Then on February 20, 1882, the Monumental City Guard was officially accepted as part of the Maryland National Guard. Since the Guard units at that time were not racially mixed, the Monumental City Guard would have the status of a **Separate Company**, unattached to any regiment.

It is not known where the Separate Company soldiered, only that they soldiered separately from other Maryland National Guard units. At some point in time, the unit, then called the "**First Separate Company**" was permitted to utilize a portion of the old 4th Regiment on Howard Street. They had to share the building with a market, and as such the old 4th Regiment became the "**Richmond Market Armory.**" While located in the Richmond Armory, or possibly sometime before, the "First Separate Company" was converted to a truck battalion in 1947. The battalion was named the 231st Transportation Truck Battalion with three truck companies, the 147th, 165th and 726th Transportation Truck Companies. An African American Lieutenant Colonel commanded the battalion with all African American officers and enlisted men. They remained in the Richmond Market Armory until the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 when the entire battalion and its truck companies were ordered to active duty. In August 1950, the battalion and its truck companies were deployed to Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, where, before 1950 came to a close, the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 231st Transportation Truck Battalion and the 726th Transportation Truck Company were ordered to Korea. The 147th Transportation Truck Company was ordered to Germany and the 165th Transportation Truck Company was ordered to Fort Eustis, Virginia.

This all African American truck battalion was the only Maryland National Guard unit ordered to active duty to support the Korean War in 1950; as a matter of fact, the 726th Transportation Truck Company was the first United States National Guard unit to set foot in Korea in 1950.

Because of the highly segregated Maryland National Guard, the officers and enlisted men of the battalion who completed their tours of duty and were returning to National Guard control were not permitted to return to the National Guard until the colors of the 231st Transportation Truck Battalion were returned to Maryland National Guard control. This did not happen until the latter part of the 1955. At that time the Adjutant General of the Maryland National Guard refused to integrate the Maryland National Guard at the insistence of the African American officers of the 231st, who then filed a petition with the Governor of the State to integrate the National Guard. The Adjutant General had one of the lower ranking officers from the 231st reform the 231st as a segregated battalion, but the unit was not permitted to return to their home station, the Richmond Market Armory. Rather, the unit was formed in a converted building on Edmondson Avenue where they trained.

In 1955, the African American officers of the 231st were successful in their petition to integrate the National Guard, and on November 21, 1955, Major General

Milton A. Reckord, the Adjutant General issued General Order Number 49 integrating the Maryland National Guard effective December 1, 1955.

In the year 1959, the State of Maryland finally built the Winchester Armory specifically for the African American Maryland National Guard unit; nonetheless the Maryland National Guard lacked all the funding for construction. In turn, the 231st Truck Battalion raised the necessary funds to complete construction by selling bricks. The Winchester Armory was eventually renamed the LTC Melvin H. Cade Armory, and for years housed the 231st Transportation Truck Battalion, and its succeeding units, retaining the history of the units that evolved from the first All African military organization of the Maryland National Guard, "The Monumental City Guard." For almost fifty years this armory has served as the home of so many dedicated African Americans who so proudly served their city, state and country.



Back bone of the Cade University. Enlisted personnel from Cade Armory at an activity.



General George Brooks making a presentation at Cade Armory.