

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant

other

2. Location

street and number 6501 Lafayette Avenue not for publication

city, town Riverdale Park vicinity

county Prince George's

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name University of Maryland

street and number 2101 Main Administration Building telephone

city, town College Park state MD zip code 20742-5021

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 16401 folio 255

city, town Upper Marlboro tax map 42 tax parcel 5 tax ID number 19 3507159

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

Contributing Resource in National Register District

Contributing Resource in Local Historic District

Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

Recorded by HABS/HAER

Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT

X Other: Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Prince George's County Planning Department

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
district	X public	agriculture	Contributing
X building(s)	private	landscape	Noncontributing
structure	both	commerce/trade	5
site		recreation/culture	0
object		defense	buildings
		domestic	sites
		education	structures
		funerary	objects
		government	5
		health care	0
		industry	Total
		work in progress	
		unknown	
		X vacant/not in use	
		other:	
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
			1

7. Description

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Building is located in Riverdale Park, Prince George's County, Maryland at 6501 Lafayette Avenue. This large parcel was originally composed of approximately 230 acres, but has been reduced to 13.707 acres. The parcel is flat and like many manufacturing plants, features an expansive grassy area and tree conservation area in front of the building, which serves as a buffer zone between the residential neighborhood south of the property. A large asphalt parking lot is located in the southeast corner of the property. The remainder of the lot is either covered with asphalt or improved with buildings. Lafayette Avenue enters the property from the southwest and extends along the western boundary of the property, parallel to the CSX rail line. The property is bisected by Noaa Road, which extends east-west connecting Lafayette Avenue and Rivertech Court. The manufacturing complex is enclosed by a chain-link fence. Three ancillary buildings are located east of the main plant.

ENGINEERING RESEARCH CORPORATION (ERCO) BUILDING

The Engineering Research Corporation (herein referred to as ERCO) Building is an imposing, two-story Moderne-style industrial building located in Riverdale Park, Maryland. Constructed in 1939 in response to a forecasted spike in general aviation, the ERCO Building is composed of a large administrative block finished in the Moderne style and a larger rear assembly block with no decorative ornamentation. Designed by ERCO engineers, the architecture for this building may have been inspired by Albert Kahn's 1937 design for the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Plant (BA-3152) in Middle River, Maryland. The smaller, Moderne-style southern block will be discussed first followed by the rear assembly block.

The southern portion of the ERCO Building fronting Noaa Road served as office space for the aviation company. The Moderne aesthetic reflected the forward-thinking engineering of ERCO. The brick and concrete-block structure has a veneer of large, smooth concrete panels. A water table and parapet wall add a horizontal emphasis to this large building, which is composed of a two-story, projecting main block flanked by long two-story wings. Adding to this horizontal effect are two bands of glass blocks that extend the width of wings. The glass blocks have been painted over. The façade (south elevation) of the main block features a central projecting bay that contains the main entry. This two-story block is three bays wide and has a parapet with fluted reliefs. Entry to the building is via the center bay, which projects slightly from the plane of the main block. The entry holds a double-leaf, metal-frame glass door flanked by full-height five-light, metal-sash fixed windows. The entry is sheltered by a one-story, semicircular glass bay capped by a cast concrete roof. The vestibule is extended by a decorative glass overhang. Entry to the vestibule is via a double-leaf, metal-frame glass door with a single-light transom. The north (side) and south (side) elevations of the wings are marked by two bands of glass blocks, which have been painted.

A one-story, two-bay addition is located off the southwest corner of the building. Based on its form and materials, this addition was constructed in the mid-twentieth century. The concrete-block structure has a shed roof and a short concrete parapet with metal coping. The façade (south elevation) has two large bays of glass

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 2

blocks, which have been painted over. The west (side) elevation has no fenestration while the east (side) elevation contains a single-leaf metal door.

The assembly plant is attached to the north (rear) elevation of the Moderne block. The large assembly plant consists of ten single-story factory bays of steel-frame, concrete-block, and brick construction; each measuring 30 to 35 feet wide, 280 to 350 feet long, and 20 feet high.¹ The original roofing material has been replaced with metal sheeting.² Metal I-beams extend from roofs perpendicular to the ridge to provide lateral stability to the sawtooth roofs. The upper gable ends of the roofs have either been clad in vertical sheets of corrugated metal or have a six-course, American-bond brick veneer. This central block of sawtooth roofs composes the majority of the assembly plant. Fenestration consists of a collection of single-leaf, metal or wood doors and large window openings of metal-sash casement and awning windows. A tall, roll-up, metal door is located along the west side of the building. The east (side) elevation of the factory bays has a single-bay, metal roll-up door near the southeast corner. East, north, and west of this central block are auxiliary appendages.

The western block of the factory is a two-story building with a six-course, American-bond brick veneer. Based on its form and materials, this block is an original feature. The flat roof with metal coping is marked by a large boiler. Fenestration consists of triple, four-light, metal-sash casements and large bays of metal-sash awning and casement windows. Most of the glass is currently broken and/or missing. Additional fenestration consists of a single-leaf, paneled wood door located on the second story of the south elevation. This opening is accessed via a metal balcony and stair attached to the face of the wall. A concrete-tile chimney stack is connected to the west elevation via a metal chute. The chimney rests on a solid foundation obscured by asphalt. Tapered, this chimney features a corbeled cap, although currently in poor condition. A small segmental metal door is located at the base of the chimney, which may have been used as an incinerator or kiln.

Southeast of the factory bays are a series of one-story structures. Starting in the south is a side-gabled structure clad in vertical sheets of corrugated metal. A metal flue extends from the east side of the structure. The twenty-light, metal-sash windows have been painted over. Moving north is a block with a six-course, American-bond brick veneer. Fenestration consists of large bays of metal-sash casement and awning windows. The openings have concrete lug sills. A one-story, one-bay porch with hood shelters a single-leaf metal door. The roof is supported by metal poles. A concrete ramp provides access to the opening. Additional fenestration of this brick appendage consists of a single-leaf door opening enclosed with concrete blocks.

East of the assembly bays is a one-story, concrete-block structure. Based on its form and materials, this appendage was constructed c. 1950. A shed roof caps the structure and features raking wood boards and thin overhanging eaves. The east elevation has two large openings with brick surrounds flanking a centrally located single-leaf metal door with light. The north bay holds a metal roll-up door while the south bay has been infilled with concrete blocks. The south elevation holds a large window opening composed of metal-sash casement and awning windows with a concrete lug sill. A second opening has been infilled with concrete blocks.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 3

Northeast of the factory bays is a one-story loading dock. Set on a solid foundation composed of poured concrete, bricks, and concrete blocks, this metal-frame loading dock is clad in vertical sheets of corrugated metal. A flat roof with wide overhanging eaves and metal brackets caps the structure. The east elevation features three loading docks with hydraulic lifts and roll-up metal doors (appear to be replacement). The north elevation has a similar opening. The south elevation has a single-leaf, metal door accessed via metal stairs. The loading dock was in poor condition at the time of the 2009 on-site survey. Portions of the exterior cladding have detached from the metal frame and the roof was sagging.

North of the factory bays is a large, one-story addition that spans the width of the building. Based on its form and materials, this addition was constructed in the mid-twentieth century. This northern block is set on a solid concrete foundation and has six-course, American-bond brickwork. A gable roof extends westward to join with two perpendicular gable roofs. The east elevation features a tall roll-up metal door (appear to be replacement). Additional fenestration consists of a single-leaf metal door with light sheltered by a metal-frame hood with corrugated metal roof. Two window openings have been infilled with concrete block. The north elevation is pierced by a series of window openings with rowlock brick sills infilled with concrete blocks and single-leaf, metal doors sheltered by narrow hoods. Metal gutters and downspouts have been installed on this elevation. The west elevation of the northern wing has nine window openings with rowlock brick sills that have been infilled with concrete blocks. A single-leaf door opening has also been infilled with concrete blocks. A narrow, one-story, two-bay section south of the enclosed openings holds a single-leaf metal door and paired, three-light, metal-sash casements with a concrete lug sill. Based on its materials, it is likely that this is an original section of the building.

BRICK SERVICE BUILDING

Located east of the main plant, this one-story masonry building is set on a concrete slab and constructed of concrete blocks with a six-course, American-bond brick veneer. A front-gable roof of asphalt shingles with raking wood boards caps the building. Support of the king truss is supplemented by a row of wood posts aligned down the center of the buildings. A metal gutter system has been installed along the wood frieze board. Dominating the roof is a large metal flue, which protrudes from the ridge. The flue has a square base tapered to a circular shaft that widens to support a tent roof of standing-seam metal. Guide wires attached to the cornice provide support to the bulbous feature. The façade (south elevation) has an elongated opening containing a double-leaf sliding wood door. Constructed of vertical boards, this door has a small cut-out on the eastern leaf near the base. The east (side) elevation has two window openings with rowlock brick sills. The openings hold 6/6, double-hung, wood-sash windows with narrow, square-edge wood surrounds. The window in the northern bay was missing its upper sash at the time of the survey. The extant sash was in poor condition and the rowlock brick sills were deteriorating. The north (rear) elevation has a centrally placed opening with a rowlock brick sill. The opening contains a louvered metal vent. A metal I-beam is attached to the upper gable end of the rear

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 4

elevation. This beam extends on a diagonal to a metal support approximately twenty feet away. Five metal shackles have been installed in a row beneath the window opening. The purpose of the beam and shackles is unknown. The west (side) elevation contains two openings identical to that found on the rear elevation.

The southwest corner of the building has failed structurally. Large cracks have developed in the upper half of this corner, stretching along the façade (south elevation) and west (side) elevation.

MECHANICAL BUILDING

This building is located along the east elevation of the assembly plant, towards the northeast corner. Based on its form and materials, this building was constructed c. 1939, the same time as the ERCO Building. Interestingly, this building was not constructed of concrete blocks or bricks, rather it is wood frame; the only extant wood-frame building on the property. Set on a concrete slab, this building is clad in vertical metal sheets and capped by a front-gable roof of asphalt shingles. A large opening is located on the east elevation. The north (side) elevation is pierced by a large circular metal pipe leading to what appears to be a generator or turbine. The interior of the building is cluttered with corrugated metal sheets and scrap building materials.

The building was in poor condition at the time of the 2009 on-site survey. The structure was leaning to the south, suggesting a structural failure. Most of the roofing material was no longer extant.

SERVICE BUILDING

This one-story building is located east of the ERCO building. Based on its form and materials, this building was constructed in the first half of the twentieth century. Its concrete-block construction and metal-sash windows support this date range. The concrete-block structure is capped by a shallow hipped roof. The roof has wide overhanging eaves and a wood frieze board. The material treatment of the roof was not visible although it is most likely asphalt. Simple in design and construction, this utilitarian building is fenestrated with a collection of paired two-light and triple casement windows. All of the windows are metal sash and are set in plain openings with concrete lug sills. The south elevation is four bays wide and features three window openings and a double-leaf, paneled wood door with lights. The entry is accessed via a poured concrete stoop. All of the openings have been covered with plywood. The west elevation is 23 bays wide with four single-leaf door openings. Multiple window and door openings have been covered with plywood. The north elevation has four window openings, all of which are now covered with plywood. The east elevation is also 23 bays wide and features two small projecting rectangular bays sheltered by a flat-roof porch. The porch has metal supports. Most of the openings have been covered with plywood.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 5

BUILDING #2

This auxiliary building, known as Building #2, is located due east of the ERCO assembly plant. Based on its form and materials, this building was constructed in the first half of the twentieth century. This one-story building has a rectangular form and is set on a concrete slab. The flat roof was not visible due to a small parapet wall. The roof line is accentuated by two wide merlons with gable roofs that stretch east-west atop the building. The façade (east elevation) has large, sixteen-light, metal-sash windows with concrete lug sills and a projecting, one-story block. The block contains a single-leaf, metal-sash door with small light. The south (side) elevation is eight bays wide. The two easternmost bays contain large, sixteen-light, metal-sash windows with concrete lug sills. The remaining window openings have been infilled with concrete block. A metal sign, reading "Building 2" is located in the upper-left corner of the elevation. The west (rear) elevation of the building is defined by two projecting bays. The southern bay has a small area to the west enclosed by a chain-link fence. Fenestration of the west elevation consists of large, metal roll-up garage doors (replacement) and single-leaf metal doors with small lights. One of the roll-up garage doors has an integrated single-leaf metal door. Stenciled on this particular door is "Coast Guard." Three large window openings with 25-light, metal-sash windows occupy the three northernmost bays. Metal vents are located below the window openings. A tall metal chain-link fence splits the middle window opening and extends to the west, forming a property line. The north (side) elevation now abuts a c. 1990, concrete-block and brick-veneer building currently operated by the National Park Service. Based on Prince George's County Atlas aerial maps, the property line actually extends through the northern section of the building.

INTEGRITY

The ERCO Building presents a moderate degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building must be evaluated in two blocks. The Moderne-style office block has retained its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Although the rear manufacturing plant has been altered, the changes in the building's form reflect an industrial building's growth and expansion in reaction to changing economic conditions and uses. The building's vacancy has affected, but not compromised its integrity of feeling and association. The ERCO Building is a rare example of a Moderne-style industrial building in Prince George's County. Located in the Town of Riverdale Park, this building maintains integrity of location. Overall, the ERCO Building maintains a moderate degree of integrity.

The Brick Service Building maintains a moderate level of integrity of design. The building's poor material condition and structural failure in one corner has greatly affected its integrity of materials and workmanship. The building's vacancy, coupled with the ERCO Building's vacancy, has resulted in a diminished integrity of setting, feeling, and association. The building maintains its integrity of location. The Brick Service Building maintains an overall low degree of integrity.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 6

The Mechanical Building presents a low integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. This building is in severely deteriorated. The building maintains low integrity of setting, feeling, and association. The building retains its integrity of location. Overall, the Mechanical Building has a low degree of integrity.

The Concrete Service Building has a moderate integrity of design, materials, and workmanship as a result of the boarding of many of the window and door openings with plywood. The building, which is vacant, maintains low integrity of setting, feeling, and association. The building retains its integrity of location. Overall, the Mechanical Building has a low degree of integrity.

Building #2 presents a moderate degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building maintains its association with the ERCO Building. The building presents a moderate degree of integrity of feeling and setting. The building retains its integrity of location. Overall, Building #2 has a low degree of integrity.

The Engineering Research Corporation Plant presents an overall moderate degree of integrity.

¹ Marina King, "Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO)," (PG: 68-22) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1985), 7:1.

² Marina King, "Engineering Research Corporation Building," (PG: 68-22) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1986), 7:1.

8. Significance

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/	<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Local History</u>	

Specific dates	1939	Architect/Builder	ERCO (in-house)
Construction dates	1939		

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☐ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant was constructed in 1939 by ERCO designers in preparation for an anticipated boom in general aviation. The ERCO Building is one of the largest buildings in Riverdale Park. Constructed in the Moderne style, this building reflects the changing architectural tide in America in the years prior to World War II (1941-1945). The modernistic style's simplistic, yet stylized design, coupled with its inexpensive construction costs during a period of great economic and social instability, directly affected the design of the ERCO Building. This industrial building mimicked the design of contemporary transportation machinery, such as ships, airplanes, and automobiles, and industrial and consumer products such as bicycles, toasters, radios, and vacuum cleaners. Owned by Henry Berliner, this plant is representative of the significant developments in aviation in Prince George's County. Berliner, a pioneer in the development of the helicopter, was a significant employer in the county. His company not only produced aircraft but also adapted to meet the war-time needs of the nation's defense programs during World War II. Additionally, the ERCO Building is significant both as an example of commercial Moderne-style architecture in Prince George's County and for its association with the Ercoupe and its designer, Fred Weick. The Ercoupe, built at the ERCO Plant, was the first tricycle aircraft and was touted as characteristically incapable of spinning. Weick was the recipient of the Fawcett Aviation Award for the greatest contribution to the scientific advancement of private flying. Following his tenure at ERCO, Weick was instrumental in the development of the Piper Pawnee and Piper Cherokee series of general aviation aircraft. The ERCO Plant is indicative of the growth and success of a local company and the field of general aviation as a whole. The ERCO Plant maintains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a Moderne-style manufacturing plant associated with the development and production of one of the pioneering airplanes in general aviation.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The ERCO Plant is located in Riverdale Park, which developed in the late nineteenth century as a streetcar suburb in central Prince George's County. The town is located approximately seven miles northeast of Washington, D.C., and is bounded to the north by the East West Highway and to the west by the heavily

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

traveled US Route 1. The City of College Park is located to the north, and the City of Hyattsville is located to the south and southwest.

The construction of dwellings in Riverdale Park began in 1890 and reflected popular trends of the period. By the turn of the twentieth century, Riverdale Park was comprised of 60 dwellings, a Presbyterian church, a schoolhouse, and a railroad station.³ The new community straddled the Washington line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which provided residents an easy commute to Washington, D.C. Recognizing the financial potential of the new suburb, builders purchased groups of lots that were soon improved by high-style single-family dwellings.⁴

The growth of Riverdale continued at a steady pace until the 1930s, when over half of the buildings were erected. In 1937, Henry Berliner, a pioneer in helicopter aviation, purchased two parcels of land originally part of the Calvert family estate known as McAlpine.⁵ The mansion was located on the west side of the rail line, though the level, relatively open farm land east of the tracks proved to be attractive to Berliner for a location for his new company, the Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO). The ERCO Plant and airfield are located north and northeast of the residential nucleus of Riverdale Park. The ERCO grounds quickly became integrated into the fabric of Riverdale Park. The large manufacturing building was joined by numerous outbuildings, Quonset huts, and an L-shaped runway.

Henry Adler Berliner, born 1895, was the son of Emile Berliner (1851-1929), a German immigrant. Emile Berliner invented the gramophone and disc records in 1887. Following the end of World War I, Henry Berliner teamed with his father to produce several helicopter designs. On February 24, 1924, the Berliner Helicopter No. 5 achieved an altitude of 15 feet (at College Park Airport, PG: 66-4) with a maneuvering radius of 150 feet, while maintaining a speed of about 40 mph. This flight, in front of U.S. Navy officials and media, was acclaimed as the first controlled helicopter flight.⁶ Henry Berliner, thoroughly knowledgeable with his father's early work in the development of gyrocopters, started the Berliner Aircraft Company in 1926. The Berliner Aircraft Company operated out of Hoover Field (present-day intersection of the George Washington Parkway and the 14th Street Bridge) in Washington, D.C. Berliner offered sightseeing tours of the area through his Potomac Flying Service, Inc., which took over 25,000 passengers for sightseeing flights between 1926 and 1928.⁷ Henry Berliner later became involved in the development of fixed-wing aircraft and in 1929, joined with Temple-Joyce to form Berliner-Joyce.

The ERCO Plant was constructed in 1939 and production of the Ercoupe general aviation airplane started immediately. Henry Berliner teamed with famed designer Fred Weick to develop the Ercoupe, the first airplane to incorporate much of the original research that Weick performed as head of the Propeller Research Tunnel section while employed with the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (NACA), predecessor to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). These new features included the inability to be held in a spin, the tricycle landing gear to improve landing and take-off safety, the fully cowled engine, and a control

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 3

system in which the rudders are linked to the ailerons to simplify controlling the airplane. All of these features were invented by Fred Weick and his team.⁸

The Ercoupe was designed to be an affordable aircraft. The price structure was as follows:⁹

Manufacturer	Year	Model	Gross weight	Approval	Engine	Serial numbers	Original Price	Units built	Units built under nameplate
ERCO Engineering and Research Corp., Riverdale, Maryland	1940 1941	415-C	1260 lb.	ATC 718 (3-25-40)	C-65-8	1 thru 112	\$2,665	112	5081
	1946	415-C*	1260 lb.	ATC 718 (3-25-40)	C-75-12 C-75-12F	113 thru 4423	\$2,665	4,311	
	1947	415-D	1400 lb.	ATC A-787 (6-13-47)	C-75-12 C-75-12F	4424 thru 4500	\$3,450	77	
	1947	415-CD**	1260 lb.	ATC A-787 (8-19-47)	C-75-12 C-75-12F	4501 thru 4868	\$3,785	368	
	1948	415-E	1400 lb.	ATC A-787 (7-8-48)	C-85-12 C-85-12F	3779, 4869 thru 5011	\$3,785	213	
	1949	415-E	1400 lb.	ATC A-787 (7-8-48)	C-85-12 C-85-12F	5003 & 5005	\$3,785		
	1949	415-E	1400 lb.	ATC A-787 (1-28-49)	C-85-12 C-85-12F	5015 thru 5040***	\$3,995		
	1950	415-E	1400 lb.	ATC A-787 (7-8-48)	C-85-12 C-85-12F	5008 and 5009	\$3,785		
	1950	415-G ClubAir ¹	1400 lb.	ATC A-787 (1-28-49)	C-85-12 C-85-12F	5041 thru 5081****	\$3,995		

As one of the most talked about airplanes in the country, the Ercoupe caught on early, and its sales soon exceeded production; had it not been built of "critical materials" its prewar production would certainly have lasted much longer.¹⁰ One hundred of the airplanes were built and sold by March of 1941 at the ERCO assembly plant and factory in Riverdale. As another batch of 100 airplanes was being started at ERCO, the government clamped down on all metal purchases, especially aluminum, as a result of war-time restrictions related World War II (1941-1945). Because of this shortage of materials, production almost completely halted at ERCO. At the time, the manufacturer had orders for over 900 aircraft. ERCO was then enlisted into the defense program by the federal government to build gun turrets and other sub-assemblies for various airplane manufacturers. In fact, an Ercoupe was the first U.S. airplane to take off assisted by a rocket when in 1941 six rockets were attached to its wings.¹¹ ERCO earned an "E" award for excellence in meeting manufacturing goals in its war contracts. Employment at the Riverdale plant rose to nearly 4,000, becoming Prince George's County's largest industrial employer at the time.¹²

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 4

Biding time during the war and hoping for its early ending, ERCO again resumed production of the Ercoupe in August of 1945; were producing 10 per day by October of that year.¹³ The aircraft was aggressively marketed through non-conventional outlets such as the men's department of the Macy's department store chain.¹⁴ On the heels of World War II, a 500-unit temporary dwelling complex for war workers at the ERCO Plant was slated for construction adjacent to the McAlpine Mansion. The complex was never completed and was demolished in the early 1950s. The McAlpine Mansion fell into disrepair and its remaining property was zoned single-family residential.¹⁵ Extremely deteriorated, the mansion was soon demolished.¹⁶

In 1946, Weick received the Fawcett Aviation Award for the greatest contribution to the scientific advancement of private flying.¹⁷ Although the resulting Ercoupe faded in the general aviation slump following World War II, Weick moved to Texas A&M University (1948-1956) where he developed a series of agricultural aircraft which evolved into the Piper Pawnee series. He remained at Piper until he retired (1957 to c. 1970) and developed the Piper Cherokee with John Thorpe and Karl Bergey. After retirement, Weick remained active in aeronautics, assisting in design studies for Beech Aircraft as well as undertaking private projects in aircraft trim and control.¹⁸

In 1949, ERCO began to develop and produce flight simulators upon the encouragement of the Special Devices Center, a branch of the Office of Naval Research. ERCO eventually manufactured some of the first aircraft-type-specific flight simulators, including simulators for the F9F Panther and F-86D Sabre jet fighters. Eventually, ERCO diversified by producing school bus bodies and rocket launchers.¹⁹ Production of the Ercoupe came to an end in 1951.²⁰

In 1954, ERCO ceased operations and sold the property to ACF Industries.²¹ The American Car and Foundry Company (ACF) was formed in 1899 and positioned itself as a premier manufacturer of new railcar and railcar parts and sub-assemblies. The ERCO Plant's location next to a railroad and the extant building stock were probably driving forces for ACF Industries' purchase of the property. However, it is not known if ACF Industries ever utilized the ERCO Plant. On the 1960 Washington Local Aeronautical Chart, ERCO Field was labeled "Abandoned airport". In 1963, the ERCO Plant was abandoned.²²

By 1985, ACF Industries was still the owner of the former ERCO facility, but several federal agencies were using the former factory building for various purposes, including as a distribution center for aeronautical charts.²³ Evidence of this still exists at the ERCO complex in the form of signs placed upon the building for agencies such as the Office of Marine Technology and the National Imagery and Mapping Agency. The property underwent multiple subdivisions, known as the ERCO Subdivision in 1991, 1993, and 2002 under the ownership of the Jacob Family Trust.

In 2000, the Ercoupe Owners Club held its annual national fly-in at College Park Airport in Maryland, just north of the ERCO Plant. The fly-in featured tours of the factory, led by ERCO alumni.²⁴ As of 2002, the

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 5

factory building was owned by the University of Maryland. The ERCO Building currently stands vacant and without power.

The airfield once associated with the ERCO Plant was located east of the building complex. Due to late-twentieth-century development and site improvements, this L-shaped airfield is no longer extant. As such, it was not evaluated. In 1986, the Secretary of the Interior determined the ERCO Building and Airfield failed to meet the National Register criteria consideration for properties less than fifty years old. Further, at that time, it was determined that exceptional historic significance had not been demonstrated for the facility's role in the history of general aviation or for production of war materials in World War II and the Korean War. The determination stated that no evidence demonstrated that this plant's production of military aviation parts in the 1940s and 1950s would qualify for exceptional significance when the plant is evaluated in the context of the unprecedented, nationwide, wartime military industrial effort.²⁵ This Determination of Eligibility (DOE) has not been updated.

³ Susan Pearl, "Harry Smith House," Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 8:13

⁴ Town of Riverdale, *Golden Panorama: "The Past is Prologue": Town of Riverdale, Maryland, 1920-1970* (Riverdale, MD: Town of Riverdale, 1970), 39; see also Pearl, "The Evolution of Riverdale in Prince George's County, Maryland," np.

⁵ Trustees of the Estate of Charles B. Calvert to Henry A. Berliner, Prince George's County Land Records, 470:299.

⁶ "1924 Berliner Helicopter No. 5", College Park Aviation Museum,

http://www.collegeparkaviationmuseum.com/Exhibitions/Aircraft_Collections/1924_Berliner_Helicopter_No_5.htm (accessed September 29, 2009).

⁷ Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Virginia: Arlington County, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/VA/Airfields_VA_Arlington.htm (accessed September 29, 2009).

⁸ Why Buy A Coupe, "Quick History," Ercoupe Owners Club, http://www.ercoupe.org/why_buy_a_coupe.htm (accessed August 31, 2009).

⁹ Coupe Models, "From the book "Ercoupe" by Louis N. Buffardi, January 1980, Chapter XIII, pages 81-82, from the table prepared by J. Dyer, July 27, 1976," Ercoupe Owners Club, http://www.ercoupe.org/Coupe_models_table.htm (accessed August 31, 2009).

¹⁰ Joseph P. Juptner, *U.S. Civil Aircraft, Vol. 8* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 73.

¹¹ U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission, "ERCO Ercoupe,"

http://www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/GENERAL_AVIATION/ERCO/GA12.htm (accessed August 31, 2009).

¹² Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Maryland: Central Prince George's County Area, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/MD/Airfields_MD_PG_C.html#erco (accessed September 1, 2009).

¹³ Joseph P. Juptner, *U.S. Civil Aircraft, Vol. 8* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 73.

¹⁴ U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission, "ERCO Ercoupe,"

http://www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/GENERAL_AVIATION/ERCO/GA12.htm (accessed August 31, 2009).

¹⁵ "McAlpine Tract Goes to Cafritz." *The Washington Post and Times Herald* (1954-1959), June 7, 1958,

<http://www.proquest.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/> (accessed September 28, 2009).

¹⁶ Marina King, "Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO)," (PG: 68-22) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1985), 8:1.

¹⁷ Joseph P. Juptner, *U.S. Civil Aircraft, Vol. 8* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 73.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 6

¹⁸ National Air and Space Museum Archives Division, "Fred E. Weick Autobiographical Transcripts," Smithsonian, http://www.nasm.si.edu/research/arch/findaids/weick/weick_frames.html (accessed August 31, 2009).

¹⁹ Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Maryland: Central Prince George's County Area, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/MD/Airfields_MD_PG_C.html#erco (accessed September 1, 2009).

²⁰ Marina King, "Engineering Research Corporation Building," (PG: 68-22) Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (1986), 8:1.

²¹ Engineering and Research Corporation to ACF Industries, Inc., Prince George's County Land Records, 1794:312.

²² Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Maryland: Central Prince George's County Area, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/MD/Airfields_MD_PG_C.html#erco (accessed September 1, 2009).

²³ Edmund Preston, Barry Lanman, and Jack Breihan, *Maryland Aloft* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 2003), 159.

²⁴ Lester A. Reingold, "Oldies & Oddities: Body by ERCO," Air & Space Magazine, http://www.airspacemag.com/history-of-flight/Body_by_Erco.html?c=y&page=1 (accessed September 29, 2009).

²⁵ National Register of Historic Places Determination of Eligibility Notification, "ERCO Main Plain and Airfield," National Park Service (May 1986).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Maryland: Central Prince George's County Area, (<http://www.airfields-freeman.com>).
Ancestry.com. *1920 and 1930 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: The Generations Network, Inc., 2005.
King, Marina. "Engineering Research Corporation (PG: 68-22)." Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form. 1985.
National Air and Space Museum, Archives Division, Fred E. Weick Autobiographical Transcripts.
Prince George's County Land Records.
U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission, "ERCO Ercoupe," (<http://www.centennialofflight.gov>).

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	<u>13.707</u>	
Acreage of historical setting	<u>~ 230</u>	
Quadrangle name	<u>Washington East</u>	Quadrangle scale: <u>1:24,000</u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Engineering Research Corporation Plant is located on a 13.707-acre parcel of land on the east side of railroad tracks, which were originally the Washington line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Lafayette Avenue extends to form the western boundary of the property. The southern boundary follows an allee of mature and immature trees that extends just north of single-family dwellings. The eastern boundary extends along the eastern elevation of Building #2 in conjunction with a small asphalt parking lot. The northern boundary extends along a chain-link fence, bisecting Building #2. The complex has been associated with parcel 5 on Tax Map 42 since its construction in 1939.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul Weishar, Jeanne Barnes, Maria Dayton/Architectural Historians		
organization	EHT Traceries, Inc., for M-NCPPC	date	November 2009
street & number	1121 Fifth Street, NW	telephone	(202) 393-1199
city or town	Washington	state	D.C.

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

CHAIN OF TITLE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY LAND RECORDS

Deed 470:299 March 23, 1937	Trustees of the Estate of Charles B. Calvert to Henry A. Berliner. (144.805 acres)
Deed 470:291 April 1, 1937	H. Clifton Byrd to Henry A. Berliner. (87.503 acres)
Indenture 531:155 May 27, 1934	Henry A. Berliner (lessor) to Engineering and Research Corporation (lessee) for rent to be paid, lessor has let McAlpine, east of the B&O Railroad, part of Lot 2 of Estate of Charles B. Calvert, allotted to his son Charles B. Calvert. Contains 144.805 acres. Also, a part of Lot 3 of Charles B. Calvert Estate – 87.503 acres, and Lot 24, 25, and 26 in Block 1 in Riverdale Park. Lease effective from date that lessee begins construction of improvements and terminates 20 years from November 1, 1938 at an annual rental of \$3,000.00 Lessee agrees to erect building at its own cost in accordance with plans signed hereto.
Deed 470:299 March 23, 1937	Richard C. M. Calvert and Zoe D. Calvert, George H. Calvert, Jr. and Cornelia R. Calvert, C. Baltimore Calvert and Mary MacAtee Calvert, C. B. Calvert Carey, W. Gibson Carey and Eleanor Towne Carey to Henry A. Berliner. (\$28,961 for the parcel known as “McAlpine”, east of the B&O Railroad, a part of Lot 2 of the division of the Estate of Charles B. Calvert. Containing 144.805 acres).
Deed 1794:312 November 16, 1954	Engineering and Research Corporation to ACF Industries, Inc. Parcel 1: Lot 2 in Charles B. Calvert estate, 144.805 acres Parcel 2: a part of Lot 3 of Charles B. Calvert estate, 87.503 acres Parcel 3: Lots 24, 25, and 26 in Block 1 of Riverdale Park Subdivision – plat JWB 5:688 Parcel 4: Lots 28, 29, and 30 in Block 1 of Riverdale Park Subdivision – plat JWB 5:688 Parcel 5: Lot 27 in Block 1 of Riverdale Park Subdivision – plat JWB 5:688.
Deed 2274:558 October 28, 1958	State of Maryland and University of Maryland to ACF Industries, Inc. Grantors convey 23.56 acres to ACF Industries, Inc. In turn, ACF Industries, Inc. conveys 26.03 acres to State for use of University of Maryland and pays to grantors \$27,000. State conveys part of Lot 3 of Charles B. Calvert estate. Part of parcel conveyed to University of Maryland (409:1).
Deed 8066:152 September 17, 1991	College Park C.L.I. Limited Partnership to Diane A. Fox and Arthur H. Blitz, trustees for the Alexander Family Trust. (Grantor indebted unto the Grantee pursuant to an unrecorded Trust Agreement dated January 2, 1991 in the aggregate principal amount of \$4,300,000.00)

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 2

Public Auction
February 7, 1992

To The Alexander Family Trust

Deed
8599:906
December 21, 1992

Diane A. Fox and Arthur H. Blitz, trustees, to Alex H. Brager and Ellis J. Koch, trustees for the Jacob Family Trust. (Lot 1 of the ERCO Subdivision. Plat Book VJ 158, No. 85. Then resubdivided at Lots 2, 3, & 4 ERCO Subdivision. Plat Book VJ 164, No. 67.)

Deed
VJ 13612:309
January 31, 2000

Thomas V. Claggett and Carol S. East, trustees of the Jacob Family Trust, to Rivertech, LLC

Deed
REP 16401:255
July 11, 2002

Rivertech, LLC to the State of Maryland for the use of the University System of Maryland, for the benefit of its constituent institution, University of Maryland, College Park. (13.707 acres)

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 3



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the façade (south elevation), looking northeast. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 4



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the façade (south elevation), looking northwest. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 5



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the west (side) elevation, looking northeast. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 6



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the west (side) elevation, looking southeast. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 7



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the north (rear) elevation, looking east. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 8



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the east (side) elevation, looking northwest. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 9



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the east (side) elevation, looking west. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 10



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the east (side) elevation, looking southwest. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 11



Photo: ERCO Building, Riverdale Park, view of the northeast corner, looking southwest (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 12



Photo: Brick Service Building, Riverdale Park, looking northwest. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 13



Photo: Mechanical Building, Riverdale Park, view looking west. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 14



Photo: Service Building, Riverdale Park, view looking southwest. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 15



Photo: Building #2, Riverdale Park, view looking northwest. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 16



Photo: Building #2, Riverdale Park, view looking northeast. (September 2009)

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 17



Image: Circa 1946 photo of the interior of the ERCO plant. [credit: Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Maryland: Central Prince George's County area, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/MD/Airfields_MD_PG_C.html#erco (accessed August 31, 2009).]



Image: [credit: The Ercoupe Network, <http://www.ercoupe.net/PhotoAlbum.html> (accessed August 31, 2009).]

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 18



Image: Fred Weick (rear of plane), Charles Lindbergh (front of plane), and Tom Hamilton (standing) [credit: Science & Society Picture Library, <http://www.scienceandsociety.co.uk/results.asp?image=10410065> (accessed August 31, 2009).]



Image: Fred Weick [credit: National Air and Space Museum, Archives Division, Fred E. Weick Autobiographical Transcripts, SI neg. no. 83-12597, Kate Igoe, http://www.nasm.si.edu/research/arch/findaids/weick/weick_frames.html (accessed August 31, 2009).]

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 19



Image: 1946 Ercoupe Advertisement in Skyways [credit: http://ercoupe.com/ErcoupeAds/Ercoupe_Ads.htm (accessed August 31, 2009).]



Image: 1949 Ercoupe Advertisement in Flying [credit: http://ercoupe.com/ErcoupeAds/Ercoupe_Ads.htm (accessed August 31, 2009).]

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 20



Image: Circa 1946 photo of the interior of the ERCO plant. [credit: Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Maryland: Central Prince George's County area, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/MD/Airfields_MD_PG_C.html#erco (accessed August 31, 2009).]

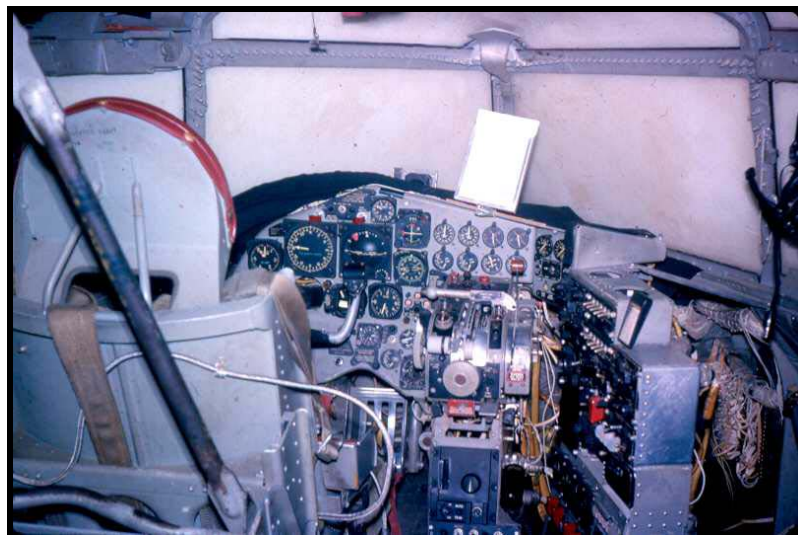


Image: Circa 1967 photo by Roy Williamson of one of an ERCO flight simulator. [credit: Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: Maryland: Central Prince George's County area, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/MD/Airfields_MD_PG_C.html#erco (accessed August 31, 2009).]

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-022

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Plant
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 21



Image: Glenn L. Martin Co., Aircraft Plant, Baltimore, Maryland. Possible inspiration for the design of the ERCO Building.
(credit: http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3524/3831829817_b0a0a3d57e.jpg, date unknown).

