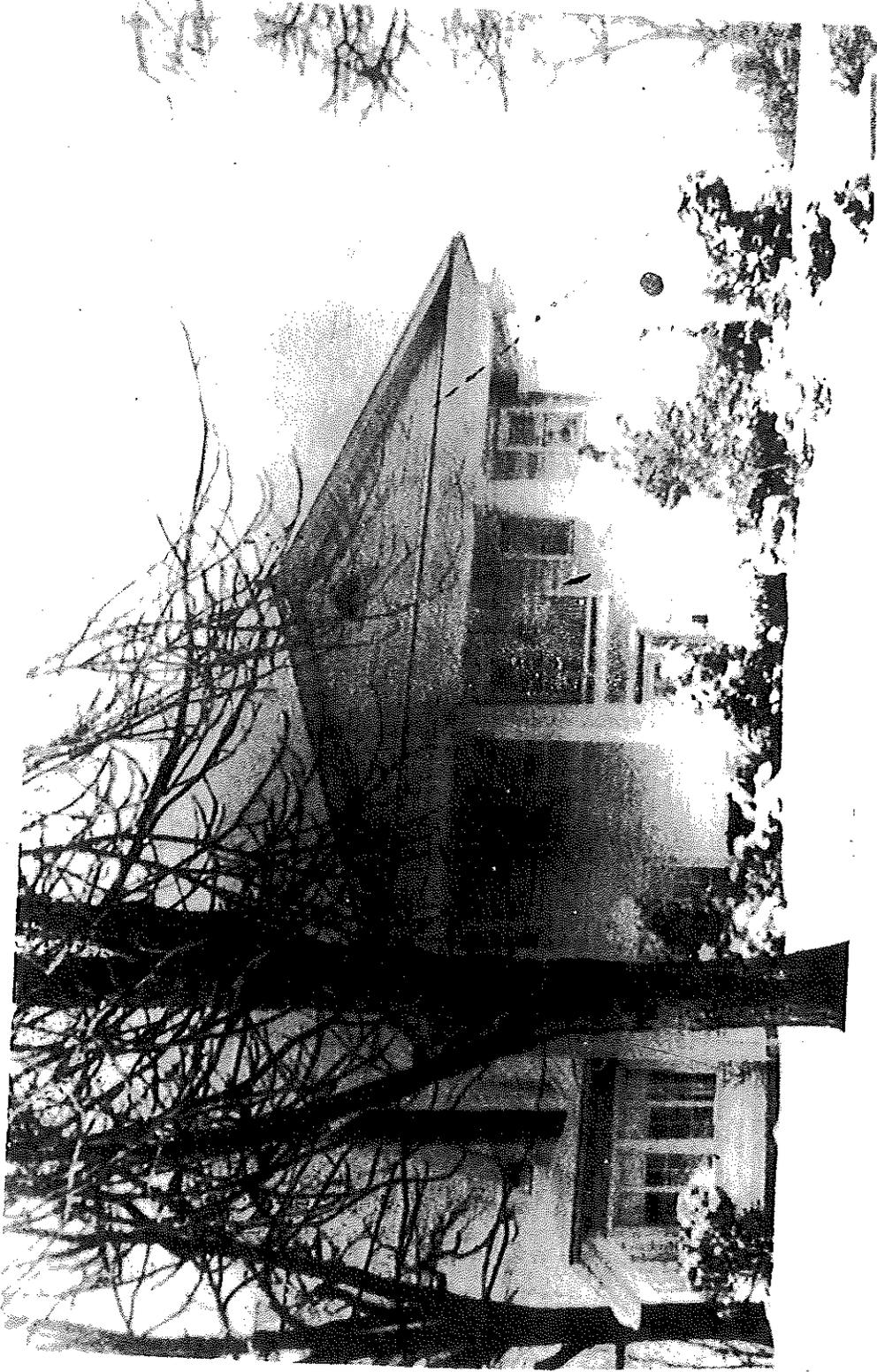


**A BRIEF HISTORY  
OF THE  
TOWN OF UNIVERSITY PARK**



"Bloomfield," restored and turned to face upon University Drive, became the center of the "Homestead Block," developed by Frank Rushe. (Bowie/Cochran)

U N I V E R S I T Y   P A R K

1936 - 1976

A Short History of a  
Young Bicentennial Community

A Project of the  
University Park Bicentennial Committee

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The help given me in preparing this "history" has been great, coming from unexpected quarters, and tendered graciously (and patiently) by all. I have been deeply touched by this willingness upon the part of so many to assist in creating something out of what so often seemed nothing. Mayor Ruth Lutwack was always there, to encourage, to suggest sources of information, and to "open doors." Her husband, Leonard, gave advice and helped to edit the text, and her daughter, Penny, was a faithful and talented "research assistant."

No one can write anything about county history without meeting and working with Mrs. Edith Bagot, Librarian of the Maryland Room, Prince George's Library, Adelphi Branch. She is charming and knowledgeable and generous with both of these rare qualities.

The map of the Hyattsville area, circa 1878, showing the Deakins' farm and the entrance thereto, is taken from the Prince George's County Historical Society's Bicentennial reprint of the Atlas of 15 Miles Around Washington, known as the Hopkins Atlas, and used with the Society's permission. The Society, organized in 1952, has done much in its short life to aid the researcher in local history. I am indebted to it. I hope its public image will soon match its already genuine contribution to a county in search of itself.

First among those understanding Park residents who were willing to share their experiences with me was, of course, Mrs. Ruth Bowie. Her fund of information, her interest, and her advice, plus her time and mementos, are an integral part of this history, and her grandson, Mike Cochran, prepared some of her pictures for inclusion in this history. Other "townspeople" who contributed time and information to the project were: Harry and James Rimmer and their sister Marie Haney, all of whom had first-hand observations of the early development of the Town; Messrs. Hamilton, Bourne, Fohrman; Drs. Zeleny (and his gracious wife) and Scott; Mmes. Brown, Huddleston, Arnold, Seidenspinner, Miller (and daughter who worked out the Deakins' "family tree"), and Binckley (a Deakins' relative) -- all of these "remembered" and tried to answer my many questions.

I am, again, indebted to the University Park Women's Club, particularly to Mmes. Hill and Shafer. I doubt that anything worthwhile can be done in University Park without the friendly assistance of this organization -- its ability to "do" is unsurpassed by any individual or group in the Town.

And, of course, there are the "guardians" of the records and the exchequer; William Rossiter and Earl Miller. They have "fetched" material, looked up statistics, and written the checks -- cheerfully and with dispatch.

The personable Mrs. Edith Miller, Secretary to St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, provided Vestry records and good cheer equally; Mrs. Rebecca Helbert gave valuable time in locating information about the Church of the Brethren;

Mrs. Betty Harris did the same in providing material about the Calvert Club; and John Bailey spent several hot days in the maze of land records stored at Upper Marlboro.

Now, perhaps, most important, those responsible for the logistics of this history -- for getting it into print: Roger Quintero, of Northwestern High School, to whom nothing seemed impossible; Mrs. Alice Piper who possesses a special talent -- she can find someone to do anything; Ms. Jessica Morgan who created the cover; Mrs. Jill Lawson who prepared the text for print; and Robert Sparks who captured some current scenes on film.

And finally, the Council of the Town of University Park, which furnished the most important ingredient -- money.

Phyllis Bate Sparks  
September, 1976

NOT ALL PROPERTY owners greeted the potential creation of the Town of University Park enthusiastically in the summer of 1936. Whether it was due to fear of future insolvency, to possibilities for political corruption, or even to a loss of the bucolic, even innocent, atmosphere of the semi-rural "park" to which some of them had retreated from the growing citification of Hyattsville, there was some opposition in the two hundred households in the development. An organized, though unidentifiable, opposition distributed a handbill reading

Do we want a small town government to satisfy a few seeking office? Or would it not be more wise for us to join the government of some well organized town that will give us dollar value for extra tax that few will pay? New small town governments cannot operate on .25% tax rate.

Despite this appeal, the charter was approved (June 26, 1936) and on August 3, 1936 the Park began its corporate existence. The transformation from suburb to independent Town had been possible because Maryland, unlike many states, permitted the incorporation of small communities. The process, of course, involved legislative authority, not too hard to get for area residents whose proposal, written and nourished by Attorney Louis Arnold, had been sponsored by Messrs. Sasscer, Prescott, and Dodson and approved within a month of its introduction, March, 1936.

According to the incorporating act, the Town was authorized to manage such problems as garbage disposal and street maintenance but "keeping the peace" and putting out fires remained in the hands of either the Riverdale or Hyattsville government

(depending on which could not argue its way out of such obligations). In paying for the costs of these services the Town was assured of three-quarters of the taxes collected by the county for roads and bridges levied upon property within the Town's boundaries. If more money was needed, the Legislature granted the Town authority to borrow up to \$10,000 (a privilege, or temptation, which the Town was able to resist until the beginning of 1939 when the problem of paying for sidewalk replacement was the straw that broke the Council's back). With the legal procedure completed, the residents of the new Town of University Park met at a "polling place provided by Harry Eisenhauer" on July 26, 1956 and chose the first governing body for the community: T. E. Bourne, mayor; William Bowie, R. M. Arnold, and A. W. Brown representing the original three wards; A. J. Linn, treasurer; and D. R. Hollingsworth, clerk.

So the three hundred acres which made up the original Town assumed, for the historical moment, a modern political status. The history of those acres' earlier years is a confused one, confounded by a paucity of records, private land dealings, myths, and a general lack of interest in this local local history. Once the domain of a "confederacy" of Indians dominated by the Piscataway tribe, the land may well have been part of a series of grants to early Maryland settlers. It is even likely that, at the time, it may have been part of the Calvert holdings (those designated "Riverdale").<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some part of the area did once belong to George Calvert. In 1664 he and William F. Deakins "exchanged" acres: Calvert selling "part of Norway" west of the Washington and Baltimore Turnpike to Deakins, and the latter "Granting for \$260" land east of the same road to George Calvert.

Of more immediate concern to the Town, the area probably came into the hands of the Deakins family near the end of the eighteenth century. By that time this family, established by the long-lived John Deakins who arrived in Maryland in 1659, had grown greatly, spreading out from its original homestead near Marlboro,<sup>1</sup> into the Vansville District,<sup>2</sup> and into Georgetown. Although both John and his son William were active in the buying and selling of land in the area now encompassed by Prince George's and Montgomery counties (an activity which seemed to be the chief preoccupation of all Maryland colonists who prospered in any way), their business deals were picayune compared to those of their descendants.

After 1765 these, especially William Jr. and Francis Deakins, became major land speculators, dealing particularly in "western" lands. This third generation of Deakins males, including younger brother Leonard Marbury, continued their real estate operations throughout the war years, perhaps abetted in some by playing active roles in support of Maryland's revolutionary effort. Whether such roles involved much actual fighting it is hard to prove. William Jr. represented Frederick County in the April convention of 1775, called to deliberate and decide upon some action in response to the battles of Lexington and Concord. Meanwhile, Leonard, having raised most of a company

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1. Known as "Deakins Hall" (the only one!), it was in the Mt. Calvert neighborhood, near old Charles Towne, six miles southeast of Marlboro.
  2. Vansville was less than a mile southeast of Ammendale Station on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

from "Georgetown," joined Colonel Griffith's Regiment of the Flying Camp and apparently served several months on the "continental line" in the Philadelphia area (August - December, 1776).

Not to be outdone, William Jr. and Francis helped to recruit militia units in Frederick County, served for a time in them, and, perhaps, helped to outfit them. If so, patriotism might have proved profitable, especially to William who owned a "mercantile house" in Georgetown. Little is known of their other wartime activities. One can assume that they prospered, primarily from land transactions, for they both continued to play prominent roles in the life and politics of Frederick County and Georgetown. The details of Leonard's life after his brave six months' service in the Continental Army are equally obscure. According to the "family history," he lived a long life (77 years), married twice (the second time to a member of the prestigious Duke family of Prince George's County, a marriage that undoubtedly increased his land holdings in this area), and produced eleven children. Sometime after 1800, when he inherited his father's "Dwelling Plantation," he moved permanently to "Bloomfield" (now located on Queens Chapel Road), which the family referred to as a "summer home."

Upon his death in 1824, Leonard's "Bloomfield" passed into the hand of his son, William Francis, who began a series of land exchanges, designed to consolidate and increase the original holdings, that continued into the last quarter of the century. Most of these involved land in the area bounded by the Northwest Branch and the Baltimore and Washington Turnpike. One must

assume that "Bloomfield" was a working plantation though there is no evidence to support this or any other facet of the life of the Prince George's branch of the Deakins family (a small and withering branch for William Francis had only two children who lived: Elizabeth Alice who did not marry and J. R. H. who had no legal issue).

One item in the records of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church notes the confirmation of Mrs. William Deakins and Elizabeth on August 26, 1856. They were two of twenty-six candidates for confirmation "presented" by Reverend William Pinkney at the consecration of a new church. The parish, having outgrown the small church built by Reverend Smallwood in Bladensburg, near Peace Cross, constructed a new one on a site near the corner of Edmonston and Annapolis roads. The Deakins seem to have attended services periodically through 1862 (William's name appears infrequently after 1858). After that date any mention of the family in St. Matthew's records disappears until the bequest of 1929.<sup>1</sup>

According to the grave markers in the family cemetery, William's son, James, served in a Confederate cavalry unit. Once again, the elusive family defies pinning down. James is not

1. The will of Elizabeth Deakins who died in 1929 contained a provision granting the William Pinkney Memorial Chapel of Hyattsville \$800 if the Vestry would accept \$300 of that sum, invest it, and use the income to "keep in order the Deakins Family burial plot located on the farm known as 'Bloomfield'." The Vestry did accept the bequest, investing \$500 in stock of the Hyattsville Building Association. A few years later, the church received a second bequest, from Mary M. Cassin, a Deakins' cousin, of \$500, the income of which was to be used in maintaining the same burial plot. See map for location of cemetery. Recently restored by the University Park Bicentennial Committee, the plot gives the Town a real link to eighteenth-century America.

listed on any roster nor is there any mention of him in available Civil War records. Twenty-one when the war started, James may well have found his sympathies lay with the South, as did those of so many in southern, rural Maryland. According to the marker, James served in Co. B, 1st Md. Bat. Cavalry. If so, his unit was mustered into the C.S.A. in November, 1863, at Winchester under Major Ridgely Brown, whose men had taken part in the Gettysburg campaign while attached to General Albert Jenkins's command.

Almost immediately the battalion was assigned to General Bradley Johnson "who had been ordered to form a Maryland Line at Hanover Junction." After six months fighting in the area around Richmond, the unit joined others in Early's Washington-Baltimore campaign. At this point the dearth of information about the Deakins family is especially frustrating. We know James survived the war. That's it! But if he were still serving with the 1st Maryland, the Early raids would have brought him within hailing distance of home.

All during the war years the Washington-Baltimore Pike had been crowded with military units, some small, some great armies. Most of these had had little effect upon the neighborhood. But not so the Early raid. On July 11, 1864, leaving Early camped at Rockville, General Johnson and four hundred men cut across the countryside to disrupt communications between Washington and Baltimore. After blowing up the railroad near Beltsville and doing a bit of damage in the Bladensburg area, they swung north and ended the day at the campus of the Univer-

sity of Maryland (then the Maryland Agricultural College). As Professor Calcott describes the moment in his A HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND,

The College officials seemed to be waiting for Johnson . . . /He/ set up headquarters in the Rosborough House and chatted pleasantly with the faculty about the local roads. Although the Negro servants 'had all decamped,' the housemother and kitchen manager, 'Miss Bettie,' provided a fine meal for the men and even found a few jugs of whiskey, all of which Johnson paid for punctiliously in Confederate script. No one knows what happened later that night, except that passers-by along the road reported they saw carriages of ladies moving toward the Inn and imagined they heard music.

Probably we shall never know whether James Deakins was a part of all that.

In the years following the war, James must have managed to remain solvent. By the early decades of the twentieth century he had added parcels of land (or exchanged them),<sup>1</sup> so that his farm, as remembered by young, visiting "cousins," stretched from the old Colesville Road to the Washington-Baltimore Pike, bounded upon the north by the Eversfield Farm. It is in these years that the names "Jackson's Necessity," "Edmonston's Pasture," and "Smith's Folly" became associated with the Deakins family.

In 1920 the property inherited by James Deakins in 1884 was sold by him and his unmarried sister, Elizabeth, to the Riverdale Realty Corporation. The latter, in turn, sold the package to the University Park Company. And so, that land,

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1. Among them was a familiar property. Called "Part of Lonehead," it was bounded by today's East-West Highway, Baltimore Boulevard, Queensberry Road, and Queens Chapel Road. James Deakins sold this piece of land to the Nichols family of Hyattsville in 1915.

which may have once been part of a land grant from King Charles to a John Deakins, but more likely was part and parcel of the vast Calvert holdings, passed into the hands of a twentieth-century real estate development company. The progress from suburban development to Town was inevitable, given the years 1923-1936, and the temper of the times.

\* \* \*

The real estate company which planned and built the early community of University Park was presided over by J. Frank Rushe and directed by a board including an ex-president of the University of Maryland, H. J. Patterson. It was Rushe who bought the old "Bloomfield" mansion, moved it to face University Drive (Queens Chapel Road)<sup>1</sup> where, remodeled and graced with white pillars brought from Chicago, it became both a family home and the distinctive trademark of the Park. Rushe had long been active in Hyattsville and county affairs. Orphaned at four, after a variety of jobs, he had moved to Hyattsville to become his first plumbing contractor, and helped to form its first fire company. Like other members of the company, such as James Rimmer who had come to this country from Southport, England, about 1910, he had a reputation for integrity and fair dealing.

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1. In 1923-24, Queens Chapel Road, known as Newcutt Road, ended at the western boundary of the Deakins farm (East-West Highway and Adelphi Road, then jointly called Colesville Road). First called University Drive, Queens Chapel Road was extended through University Park after the development was begun.

University Park was like a host of other "street car communities" which sprang up in the 1920s, though from the very first more residents chose to commute by car than by the trolley which, taking one-and-a-half hours to make the trip from D. C., stopped either at the Riverdale or College Park stations. (There was available a not-always dependable bus, running from 15th and H Streets, N.E. to Laurel which would stop at University Park.)

The development happily coincided with the opening of new sewer and water mains constructed by the Washington Suburban and Sanitary Commission which had extended a system of gravity sewer lines along the small tributaries feeding into the Northwest Branch. In addition, the land bought by the Company offered buyers higher elevation than many of the surrounding areas, plus the presence of trees coming from a second growth on cutover land after a cessation of farming operations, altogether a pleasant prospect for those wishing to combine country with city living.

Building up (west and west by northwest) from Baltimore Boulevard, the streets, named after members of the company,<sup>2</sup> were lined with houses which were "thoroughly modern; of approved designs; and of the best construction -- offered at prices ranging from \$8500 to \$13,500." Residents were promised paved

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1. In 1941 the County decided to coordinate the names of the various suburban areas with those of the District. The following changes were made: Jackson to Sheridan; Monroe to Tuckerman; Patterson to Tennyson; Bowen to Toledo; Rushe to Underwood; Shepherd to Van Buren; Landardt to Woodberry; Wells Boulevard to Wells Parkway. North of Queens Chapel Road -- Jackson to 40th; Monroe to 41st; Wine to 42nd; Ella-ville to 43rd; Cecil to 44th Avenues.

streets and sidewalks as well as a maintenance system "rendering efficient service" in the removal of trash and cutting the grass along the boulevard strips. Prospective buyers had their choice of "attractive homes completed and ready for occupancy" or "choice lots" with the services of a "noted architect" to counsel in the character of the home best suited to the selected lot. In its 1925 advertising, the Company promised a "graded" school in the autumn housed in its "own building designed and erected for the purpose." The purpose was, also, if unspecified in the real estate brochures, to house the Company's offices which were to be moved from less pretentious accommodations on Baltimore Blvd.

To lend substance to the glowing claims of their advertising, all directors of the Company were expected to build, and live in, houses in the development. But buyers were not hard to find. Many of them were people who had "walked" the area on Sunday strolls or had come out to the neighborhood on Sunday afternoon rides on the street car. Some, like A. M. Brown, whose family had already made the suburban move to Riverdale, found the area when hunting on the property. The house to which he later moved his family was the second to be built in the development; the first being that of B. O. L. Wells, one of the Company directors.

Although the Company had promised that there was "no pioneering to be done in University Park," one resident remembers a constantly overflowing stream, clouds of sand flies, and rats which her husband shot from an upstairs window. Yet life in the community during the years 1925-1936 was pleasant. Neighbors

were congenial, children played without fear of harm in the woods which were everywhere, and the community held an unending stream of card parties and bazaars at the school.

From the beginning it was made plain to all property owners that University Park would be limited to the use of single family dwellings, free from "any commercial encroachment." Until the late 1940s, each deed, negotiated between buyer and individual seller, contained a variant upon a covenant. It was these "restrictive covenants" which were invoked in later years when the Town of University Park found itself faced with the continuing problem of tourist homes, apartment projects, home operated businesses, and the like.

As the Company prospered and the development grew, the provision of "services" apparently became too expensive and too complicated a burden. The Company gave notice to the residents that it would end its agreement to handle "housekeeping chores" in 1933. Householders, faced with the task of assuming such obligations themselves, formed the University Park Community Association presided over by George Cooke. Almost immediately the move to incorporation began. The move, as might be expected, was prompted by the failure of some residents to contribute their share of the cost of "services" as well as to abide by "rules" agreed to by members of the Association. Lacking legal recourse, the community group was helpless. Incorporation seemed the only answer.

The major concern of that first Council was, naturally, money. In its initial meeting, August 6, 1936, the group, having considered an estimate of expenses to be "incurred," in the coming year, as well as the Town's approximate assessable base of one million dollars, agreed that a tax rate of \$.25 per \$100 be levied on all property "within the limits of University Park, Inc." To swell the coffers: (a) the Council applied to the P.W.A. for a grant to meet about one-half the estimated costs of re-conditioning and resurfacing the streets (the application was denied); (b) began the process of securing the Town's share of the Road Rebate Fund (this was a sum of money paid to the towns of the state by the State Roads Commission for the upkeep of state roads within a town's limits).

Most of the Town's income, amounting to less than \$4000 in January, 1937, was earmarked for trash removal and street maintenance (including lighting, signs, paving, and later, sidewalks). In view of the fact that 43rd Avenue was a "corduroy road," that Van Buren Street was a dirt path above 4305, and that no cross streets existed north and west of Queens Chapel Road, it is easy to believe that streets would be a major item in the Town's budget for years to come.

In general, as streets were filled with residences, the initial paving and improvement was financed by a special assessment on each property. Once the work was completed and approved by the Town Engineer, the Council accepted the street in a process such as that which was followed in the "takeover" of Patterson Place (now Tennyson) in 1943. As early as 1947 the

financial burden of street care had grown so great that the Town sought, and received legislative authority to raise the tax rate to \$.50 per \$100 assessed valuation.

Waste removal was a concern second only to street care. For almost ten years a Thomas Brooks, paid \$85 a month, with a "premium of an additional \$15 per month for good behavior," plus a helper, Slim who was paid \$260 a year, was in charge of this vital aspect of communal living. Almost as persistent, if not as expensive, a matter commanding the attention of successive Town governments was maintaining the residential, non-commercial character of the Park. In its first year the Town Council began a two-year hassle with a Mr. Lightbown who had been reported, accurately as it turned out, to be building a tourist home on Baltimore Boulevard between Rushe (Underwood) and Sheridan Streets. Ignoring a letter from Mayor Bourne reminding him that such an intention would violate the "covenant" of the Park, Lightbown appeared before the Council in May, 1937. After a heated discussion regarding the Council's refusal to permit gas installation to his house, Lightbown left, promising to "use his physical strength" against anyone opposing his "desires." When the University Park Company refused to enforce its "restrictive covenants" in the case, the Town sued Lightbown in Circuit Court.

Meanwhile the same problem arose with other residents, many of whom, when jostled by the Council, complied with Town regulations. Alfred Yancy moved his real estate business and Anna Durrity closed her tourist home. The owners of the Lee property on the south corner of Baltimore Blvd. and Queens Chapel Road removed their tourist signs in 1941 after four years of

legal correspondence and action, including an appeal to the Park and Planning Commission (it was a short-lived victory for the property soon became a "permanent" tourist haven). Even more obdurate was a Mr. Friedenbergr who operated a tourist home at 6806 Baltimore Blvd. in the old Shepherd house, for which he had made an obvious addition. This property, too, continues to so function and thus be a "problem."

Oddly enough, one of the first attempts to introduce non-residential development into the Park came from Charles Clagett, a member of the University Park Company, who planned a business area to be built along Queens Chapel Road. This, after being debated in a Town meeting in October, 1936, was rejected. So, too, was a later application from Clifford Lewis, for permission to build a hotel at the corner of Wells Boulevard and Baltimore Blvd. The desire to divorce the community from any commercial activity led the Council to reject even applications from the College Park Kiwanis Club and the Riverdale Fire Department in 1941 to hold carnivals on the grounds adjacent to the school.

In the early years the legality of the covenants involved in any discussion of zoning was rarely questioned. A Twenty-fifth Anniversary Open Letter to residents in 1962 claimed that "These restrictive covenants have been tested in various cases." Yet, on one occasion, the courts, when appealed to, would not encourage their enforcement. In 1940 neighbors protested that the quality of homes built by Hannum and Turner on Patterson Place (area of Tennyson, 41st, and 42nd Streets) were inferior to that expected

of University Park residences. The matter dragged on in the local courts until the spring of 1941 when it was dropped after the Hyattsville Building Association testified that \$5000 had "been furnished on each of the houses." While some parts of the original covenants were obviously invalidated by the wave of "open housing" legislation at all government levels in the late 1960s, the Town was able successfully to halt would-be violations as various as a taxidermist shop on Woodberry Street and a dentist office on East-West Highway.

Then, as now, the community was beset by acts of vandalism either to individual properties or to the parkland. In the spring of 1944 many young trees were cut down on land just purchased to supplement the original park acres. Too, there was a constant stream of appeals to the Council for action in regard to "violations" by residents in the use of their property: a cow here, a horse there, and chickens everywhere. Particularly prominent in that regard were the chicken coops owned by several families along the lower part of Underwood Street, across from the school. In the mid-1960s chickens were still a source of complaint but pigeons and dogs had taken the place of cows and horses. No one, apparently, was disturbed by the frogs that gathered each year in the swamp/bog occupying the space between the school and Queens Chapel Road. These, according to one senior resident, attracted part of the "foreign community" collecting in Washington during the war years. Many of these, considering frog calls an irrefutable sign of spring, would come out to the "country" in University Park to hear them.

In its first quarter of a century as an incorporated community, University Park was involved primarily with the general process of expansion, not just within its original boundaries but also without (a process still going on, though in a minor way). This physical growth called for continual adjustment in the maintenance obligations discussed above (street paving, lighting, etc.). It also called for successive amendments to the Charter allowing political accommodation as well as efforts to both expand the school facilities and the opportunities for communal recreation.

By 1941 the Town had grown to such an extent that a fourth ward, established from "portions of the land lying west of University Drive" was organized. A second political (and physical) addition came only four years later when the Town agreed to annex College Heights which had been developed by Shepherd, Gilbert, and Seidenspinner just west of Baltimore Blvd. in the area now known as Ward 5. (In 1941 the Seidenspinner interests purchased a second parcel of land in the northwestern corner of the University Park. This area, largely built on in the 1960s, was the last portion of the community to be "accepted.")

The process of annexing College Heights involved a series of meetings -- of the residents desiring annexation, of their representatives and the Town Council, and, finally of the whole Town, as well as a series of conditions to be met before incorporation. One of the latter included the extension to the area of "restrictive covenants," a matter of particular concern in view of Seidenspinner's plans to build an apartment house on part

of his property fronting on Baltimore Blvd. Once most problems were resolved, the residents of the Town, in special election in November, 1944, voted 63 for and 14 against annexation. The present political structure of the Town was completed in 1962 with the creation of two additional wards, 6 and 7. The annexation of College Heights plus the earlier purchase for \$5000 of a tract of land adjacent to the school property from the University Park Company in 1943 essentially completed the physical structure of the community.

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Because of the exclusively residential nature of the community the elementary school assumed, from the very earliest years, an unusual position in the Town's social structure. It became a focal point of most of the area's activities (and interests). If residents were not acting in concert to secure physical improvements for, or additions to, the school, they were serving on various committees to sponsor some school-related project or event. For almost all University Park residents the school was a common bond -- at least for a minimum of six years.

The first generation of Park school children, those whose parents had "moved out" to University Park, went to Riverdale Elementary School. But by the mid-1920s the youngest spent their first four years in two rooms of the building "promised" by the University Park Company on the corner of 44th Avenue and Tuckerman Street. Wanting to expand its offices there, the

Company offered the County School Board three acres of land, free, along the east side of the creek -- in return for a school building. Despite the complaints of parents that the school would be in the "boondocks," that children would have to tramp through woods and swamps, and that they would have to cross an unguarded, "dangerous" street to get there,<sup>1</sup> the new school, costing \$30,000, with four classrooms, two teachers, and eighty students opened in the fall of 1928. An addition in 1937 doubled the size of the building while the odd piece of land between the school and Queens Chapel Road, bought from the real estate company in 1938, enlarged the school playground. In 1952, a third addition to the school completed the facilities used by twenty-five years of the Town's youngest and brightest.

As the only truly public building in the Town, and in view of the role the school was expected to play in modern American society, much of the Town's common life centered there from the beginning. Starting in 1938, with the aid of the W.P.A. (the Works Progress Agency), the University Park P.T.A. supported a kindergarten there until 1963, when the County assumed responsibility for the program. During these same years, in addition to pre-school education, various Scout organizations (the

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1. In a letter (December, 1939) to Caesar Aiello, chairman of the County Traffic Safety Committee, Mayor Bourne protested a fifty-mile-per-hour sign which had just been erected at the corner of Queens Chapel Road and Baltimore Blvd. Noting that such a sign would permit motorists to "drive their cars . . . through the heart of University Park and past the University Park schoolhouse, which is located about three squares below the intersection," creating a hazard of considerable proportions for children going to and from school, Bourne called for its "immediate" removal.

County's first Cub Pack was formed at the school in 1936 with Mrs. Louis Arnold as one of the leaders), Campfire Girls, a short-lived French program begun by Mmes. Schamp and Mandil (1958), and ballet classes (1958-1963) flourished, all of which were undertaken and supported by parents working within the social structure offered by the school.

The major, perhaps the only, event in the Town's history which served to bring residents together in a spirit of communal effort, much of which had concomitant social aspects, was World War II. Still a small community, and unusually homogeneous (the 1940 census had listed 853 residents or about 253 plus families earning a median income of \$10,000), the Town, using the school as a center and operating through the Council, and the comparatively young University Park Women's Club,<sup>1</sup> rallied behind the nation's war effort. A steady stream of young men from the Park moved into the Armed Forces. The weekly PRINCE GEORGE'S POST kept the list up to date: Walter Bramm, George Ronchi, William Dunn, William Wentworth, and many others. In December, 1943, local papers reported "University Park Man Commands Fortress in Epochal Raid," describing Captain William Burdick and his crew who shot down three enemy planes over Mainz and returned to base safely despite extensive damage to their B17, "The Sitting Duck."

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1. Formed in the winter of 1941, the local group, numbering over sixty women living in the Park, was federated with the national organization in March of that year. In the thirty-five years since that time the Club has been a major center of the Town's life, sponsoring a variety of community projects, some of which, like the Christmas Decoration Contest, the spring "garden tour," and the scholarships for Northwestern graduates, have become University Park traditions.

During these years other young men of the community were singled out for special commendation, among them James Miller who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal in 1944 for his work in transporting supplies over the "Hump," from India to China; and Russell Thrift, given the Air Medal and Oak Leaf Cluster in 1945 for "meritorious achievement while participating in heavy bombardment missions in continental Europe."

Meanwhile the women of the Town spent their hours working with the local Red Cross chapter of the University Park Women's Club. The latter

registered every resident and compiled a special list of those able to volunteer for community service. A committee of twelve members served USO suppers, and the entire club furnished a room for WACS at Ft. Meade. Thirty members assisted in all rationing programs, and three were O.P.A. members. Every year the club sponsored and manned the Red Cross War Fund drives. Twenty-five members received certificates for completing a home nursing class organized by the club. Two women served full-time as Red Cross Motor Corps captains. Holiday occasions saw generous donations of gifts to servicemen in nearby hospitals and to the USO. The club collected six tons of garments for the Victory Clothing Drive and organized a Red Cross surgical dressing unit which made 77,390 dressings. In a house-to-house survey, the club compiled a list of service people for the area and made and presented a service flag to the community. Members gave over 140,000 hours of volunteer service to wartime activities.

The "defense" of the Town was entrusted to Chief Air Raid Warden Edgar Czarra (assisted by Millard Charlton, Albert Heagy, and William Rossiter). Starting in January, 1943, all residents were required to observe the "Blackout Precautions" set by the National Defense Program. For a few months, the Town Council considered altering the Charter to permit the Town to purchase fire-fighting equipment for the community, but in view of the

expense, decided to continue to rely upon Riverdale in case of emergency. Nonetheless, to keep Riverdale alert and give the Town's residents ample warning, the Council purchased an air raid siren and installed it upon the roof of the school. This was "functionable" throughout the war years at about \$7.50 a month (for current) and, while never used except in practice, provided for some, at least, a greater sense of security. To further "protect" the Park in that first disastrous year of the war, the Council sent the air raid wardens out to patrol the streets during Halloween festivities with the request that they pay special attention to "signs and electric lights."

The community's first aid station was, naturally, the school which, in turn, was serviced by that of College Park, operating in a district "commanded" by the casualty station at the University of Maryland. The Town helped to equip the College Park unit, contributing \$150 for that purpose in April, 1942. In addition to being trained for and manning the casualty station, Park residents, many of whom were associated either with the University's College of Agriculture or with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, worked their victory gardens. These, located in the many vacant lots in the Town or in the farmland across Adelphi Road in University Hills (such as Mrs. Clay's farm), were generally fertilized by natural means via the University's stables and the courtesy of Joseph Vial of Van Buren Street, a national Percheron horse specialist. During the periods of water rationing, common during these years, the gardens were kept growing by the rinses of many local washing machines.

While their older brothers fought in all corners of the globe, Cub Scouts collected scrap paper, residents watched Harry Leonard (later to serve for more than ten years as the Town's Civil Defense Chief) demonstrate how to put out fires caused by incendiary bombs, and the casualty list of men from University Park grew. On Memorial Day, 1945, the University Park Women's Club sponsored a ceremony marking the Town's contribution to the war by setting up a flag pole and holding a service at the Christmas Tree Triangle on Sheridan Street and Queens Chapel Road. On this occasion, Army Chaplain Leighton Harrell, home on furlough, praised the 174 men of the community who had, and still were, serving in the Armed Forces. Harrell made special note of the six who had died in the service of their country.<sup>1</sup> Twelve years later (1957) the Women's Club presented a gold-starred flag, honoring these, to the school where it still hangs.

Fortunately, the war brought no great hardship to the community. Indeed, these years saw the families of the Park working together not only in protecting and improving the physical environment of their homes and contributing their bit to salvage drives, wrapping bandages, rationing programs, but also in devising a number of recreational activities to improve the quality of life. In pursuit of amusement some would tramp

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1. The "Gold Star" men were: T/Sgt. Arthur E. Brittain, 384th Bombardment Group, killed August 12, 1943; T/Sgt. James R. Hoffman, Radio Operator, lost over Gulf of Mexico in the summer of 1943; Lt. Col. John H. Matthews, killed in Normandy on D-Day; Corp. William H. Pearce, Engineer and Gunner on B-29, lost in raid over Japan in July, 1945; 1st Lt. James A. Thompson, killed in plane crash in Brazil in May, 1944; and S/Sgt. Albert D. Woodward, Ball Turret Gunner on B-24, lost in Adriatic Sea in July, 1944.

through the paths in the woods above Beechwood to the Buddington stables near present-day St. Marks and ride the horses rented therefrom through the woods and streams of Lewisdale and Cool Spring. Local Girl Scout troops would follow the same paths to the western end of the University campus and practice their craft at a day camp known as Camp Thorn. The most popular of the recreational pasttimes organized were the softball league organized in 1942 pitting street teams against each other and the "skating pond venture."

In November, 1942, Dr. Joyal, speaking for the Citizens' Association, the P.T.A., the University Park Women's Club, and other groups,<sup>1</sup> proposed that the Town Council help create a skating pond, about 150 feet by 500 feet, on the low land owned by the Town running southeast from the school to Queens Chapel Road. Having already consulted Professor Carpenter of the University of Maryland who estimated that an inexpensive earth dam built at a point thirty to forty feet north of the road would flood a substantial area and create a pond with a maximum depth of not over two feet, Joyal asked the Council's aid in financing the venture. With the latter's assistance, the firm of Dyer & Price of Hyattsville was retained to prepare a survey map and

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1. This included the Calvert Club. Originally known as the Junior Women's Club of Riverdale, the group, organized in 1937 by several University Park women, withdrew from the national federation a year later to pursue a more independent approach to projects involving "community welfare and spiritual development." Since that time its members, including founders such as Mmes. Oldenberg, Rowe, Webb, Watkins, Starr, and Weller, have quietly served University Park in innumerable ways.

compute the water level. Once done, the area was cleared of brush by residents working with a "donated" team of horses and a tractor. Soon the pond was ready. Thereupon the Town's skaters practiced their skills, whenever weather permitted, until the war's end brought other uses for the land.

\* \* \*

As in thousands of communities over the country the end of the war ushered in a period of almost frenzied construction in University Park. Builders like Yates, Boswell, Pierce, Polinger, and the Rimmer brothers (completing the areas planned by their father, a member of the original University Park Company who had died in 1944) filled the lots northwest and northeast of Queens Chapel Road with houses. Not until the latter part of the 1960s did the process end when the last of the Town's "empty" spaces was gradually occupied. By 1960 there were 963 single family dwellings in the Town with an assessed value of ten million dollars. It was, also, the proud boast of the Mayor that the Town has the highest income per wage earner of any Town in Maryland.

The "expansion" of these years included the addition of the Riverdale Presbyterian Church to the community and the beginning of a genuine effort to develop and maintain the park of University Park. Beginning as a series of weekly prayer meetings in 1895, the Riverdale Parish had met in a small frame church on Rittenhouse Street in Riverdale for sixty years before

it decided that new quarters were essential. Finding, in a 1937 survey, that the center of its church-going population was west of Baltimore Blvd. and on the line of East-West Highway, the members of the congregation decided to locate their new church in University Park, on four lots between Wells Parkway and 44th Avenue. Ten years later the parish was ready to build. But, acting upon the advice of the Town Council, which remarked the poor drainage on the original site, the congregation exchanged that location for one of eight lots between Queens Chapel Road, 43rd Avenue, and the park. In 1950 the present sanctuary was dedicated, and four years later the church school building was added. In no time at all, the Riverdale Presbyterian church had become a recognizable part of Town life.

An even older religious role in the life of the community of University Park was that played by the Church of the Brethren. Moving from two afternoon Sunday schools, one started in 1922 at the "school house" on Riggs Road, and the second, to accommodate a growing "parish," at the Traction Station in Riverdale, the congregation purchased several lots from the University Park Company in 1925. Costing a total of \$2500, these lots "covered" the corner of Tuckerman Street and Baltimore Blvd. On one of these a small church, costing \$9000, was erected and there the first service was held on May 29, 1927. Having weathered the discouraging years of the Depression and World War II (at one point, in 1933, the congregation decided to sell some of their University Park land in order to meet their expenses), the church

found itself considering expansion of its facilities in order to meet the needs of a growing number of worshippers. In 1949 a parsonage, built on nearby land on Tuckerman Street, was dedicated (later sold in 1963), and in 1953 a new sanctuary, costing several times that of the original building, \$38,000, was added to the structure. The willingness of the congregation of the Church of the Brethren, like that of the Riverdale Presbyterian Church, to open its facilities to the uses of the Town have enriched, in some way or other, the lives of two generations of residents of University Park.

The park itself, amounting to more than seventeen acres bordering a creek, has not been all boon and blessing. For forty years it has been the target of residents' complaints about flooding, mosquitoes, unsightly debris, and the gathering place for juveniles bent on delinquency. For forty years it has been the site of many local recreational and social activities. And during these same forty years the members of the community have cooperated in its development and beneficent use closely and in generally friendly spirit. Until the Council established a Park Board, first chaired by James Fox, in 1951, much of the "improvement" of park areas was undertaken by individual citizens or special groups such as the University Park Parkway Improvement Committee organized in April, 1946. In September of that year THE WASHINGTON POST reported the dedication of a community fireplace built by volunteers under the direction of a stone mason in an area cleared by the Campfire Girls. This was no mean task. The first thing some of the members of the new Park Board had to

do was to rent a bulldozer and cut a swath through the acreage, from the school to Adelphi Road. So thick was the growth that two of the men, attempting a preliminary survey of the land, had to carry a machete with them in order to make clear sightings.

These early volunteer efforts to "create" a park were both aided and hindered by the Town government. An attempt to build a garage for the growing number of Town vehicles at the stream's end on Adelphi Road met with delegations and petitions reminding the Council that the area was reserved for park use only. At the same time the local government began a regular program of spraying to rid the community of mosquitoes. This program, begun primarily to clean out the many low areas of the Town, was expanded through the years to include all parts of the Park. Working in conjunction with the University of Maryland and the State Mosquito Control Board, the first insecticide used was, naturally, DDT. This provoked controversy in the community long before the official ban on its use. One resident urged the Council to build martin houses throughout the park since the purple martin was known to eat a thousand insects a day. In recent years the program has been continued with a more acceptable pesticide.

For many years, indeed all the years, the chief problem facing the Park Board has been the stream. Technically speaking, it is nameless. Rising from springs in the old Heurich Tract, in an area in which a generation of University Park children played around what was called "Nine Pond," the stream flowed in a southeasterly direction through the Park, joining eventually

with the Northeast Branch below Riverdale. On its travels through the Town it is fed not only by the natural run-off from the land but also by a series of springs in the community. Because of its small fall (less than fifty feet) within the boundaries of the Town and because of the pile-up of debris and poor condition of the main culvert on Queens Chapel Road, the stream has flooded its banks almost every year.

In 1951 the vast Heurich estate was sold and there immediately began a long, involved and, in the end, fruitless effort to restrict its zoning to Residential A, as it was then known. As late as the winter of 1955-1956, the attorney for the new owners was saying that "any development of the Heurich Tract facing Colesville and Queens Chapel roads would have houses comparable or better than those already in the Town of University Park." In reality the decision to commercially develop the land had already been made. The 1960s found the land supporting not only the Prince George's Plaza Shopping Center and large apartment projects but also the Federal Building Complex (begun in 1963). The latter, originally a \$78,000,000 project, had promised "underground parking, malls, movie and legitimate theaters, recreation areas, . . ." Aside from the obvious sociological effect upon the community, the actual construction of the area, continuing over a fifteen-year period, worked hardship upon the mainspring of the Town's parkland. Since most of the acreage had been in unimproved pasture, the Heurich farm had absorbed much of the excess water in the area of the creek. But as asphalt covered foot after foot of the old pasture in the

"development" of the property in the years after 1955, the creek found itself wrestling with a constant overload of moisture, a load made even greater as the process of building tore the ground, hastening its erosion and sending tons of silt and gravel into the creekbed.

The Park Board began with a budget of \$5000 financed by a \$.05 tax increase. The Board worked hard to maintain the quality of the land as well as to take care of other odd parcels of land acquired by the Town through the years such as the small triangle at East-West Highway and Queens Chapel Road bought from Karastinas for \$3000 in 1975. As the population grew the use of the park increased. Picnic equipment was constantly added (and just as frequently stolen or vandalized); paths were constructed (and some, such as the recent offer by the M.N.C.P.&P. Commission to put in ten-foot bicycle paths, turned down); tennis courts were upgraded, expanded and protected against "foreign" encroachment; and play facilities provided for children.

As the Town grew so did its "housekeeping chores." Always there were streets. Maintenance alone was a major item in the Town's annual budget. For example, in September, 1957, it was estimated that just to fill the holes in the Town's streets would require 450 gallons of hot tar at one dollar a gallon. (By 1976 the annual allotment for street care in the Park's budget was \$20,500.) Besides keeping the streets passable the Town had decided to promote sidewalks. In 1951 the Council gave notice that these would be required, to be furnished by builders, before it would accept properties. Closely allied to these

Original

[W. Deakins, Jr., to Council.]

Honb<sup>le</sup> The Council of Safety, Lower District of Fredk County,  
Gentlemen: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1776.

Yours of the 17<sup>th</sup> last month to my brother Leonard came to hand a few days after he had marched for Philadelphia, he waited several days after his letter to you of the 12<sup>th</sup> but receiving no orders he consulted Colo Griffith, who ordered him to march and recruit on the way, four or five men to compleat his company, after which his return was to be made from Philadelphia. I hope, my brother will stand excused for this step, for both the Col<sup>o</sup> and himself thought it for the good of the province; he would have been one of the first companies full, had he not been unlucky in some of his officers, he has himself recruited most of his men. Bruce who solicited you for the Ensign's commission has not recruited one man, notwithstanding he engaged to go with the Company till the day they march, and even then promised the Captain to follow him in a day or two, but has since declined.

I know my brother will wish to have his first Sergeant, M<sup>r</sup> Denniss Griffith appointed his Ensign, and when he makes his return I expect he will solicit you in his favour. He is a very deserving young man and I think merits the commission.

The cash you sent 'by M<sup>r</sup> Nicholls for my Brother is delivered to the Committee of this District who will account for it.

I am Gentlemen  
Your obed<sup>t</sup> Hble Serv<sup>t</sup>  
Will Deakins Jun<sup>r</sup>

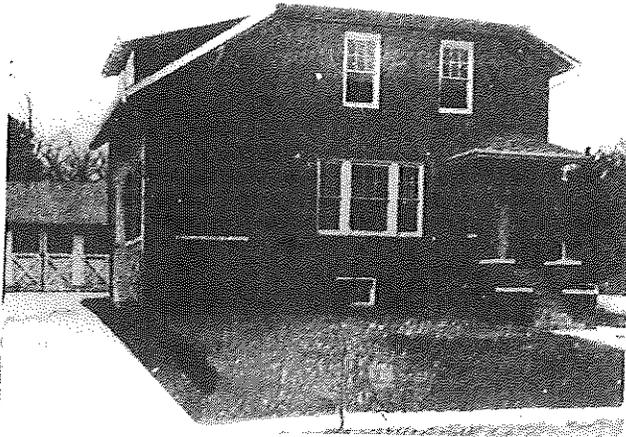
Testimony to Leonard Marbury Deakins' Revolutionary War service. (Maryland Archives)

Frank Rushe, president  
of the University Park  
Company. (Bowie/Cochran)



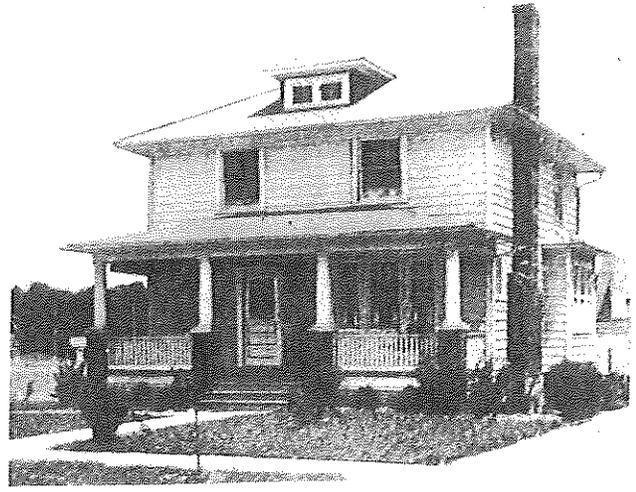


"Bloomfield," which originally faced eastward and was reached by a tree-lined driveway from old Colesville Road. See map on pp. 35-36. (Bowie/Cochran)

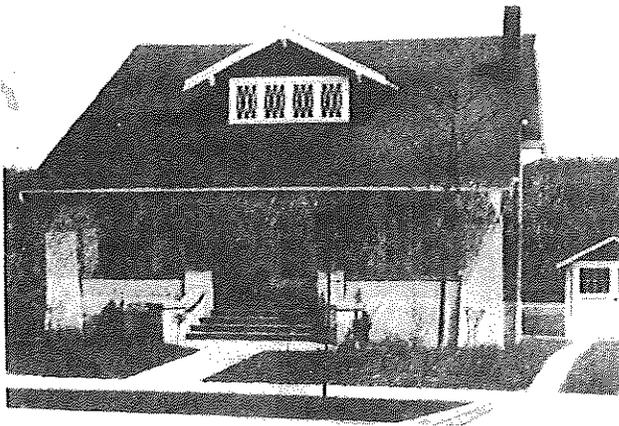


Rimmer

"THOROUGHLY MODERN HOUSES" offered for sale by the University Park Company at prices ranging "from \$8500 to \$13,500." (Bowie/Cochran)

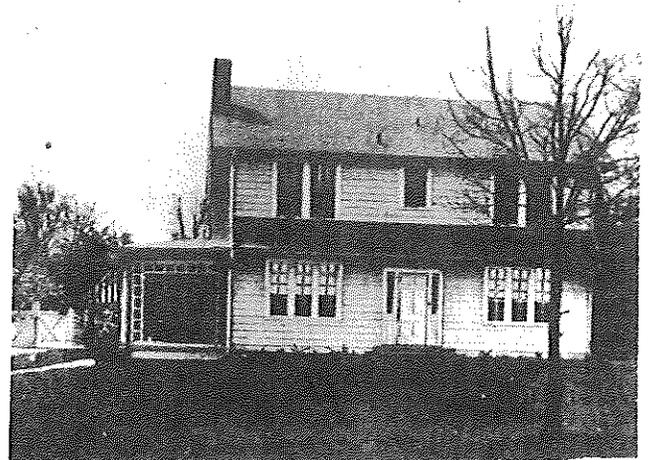


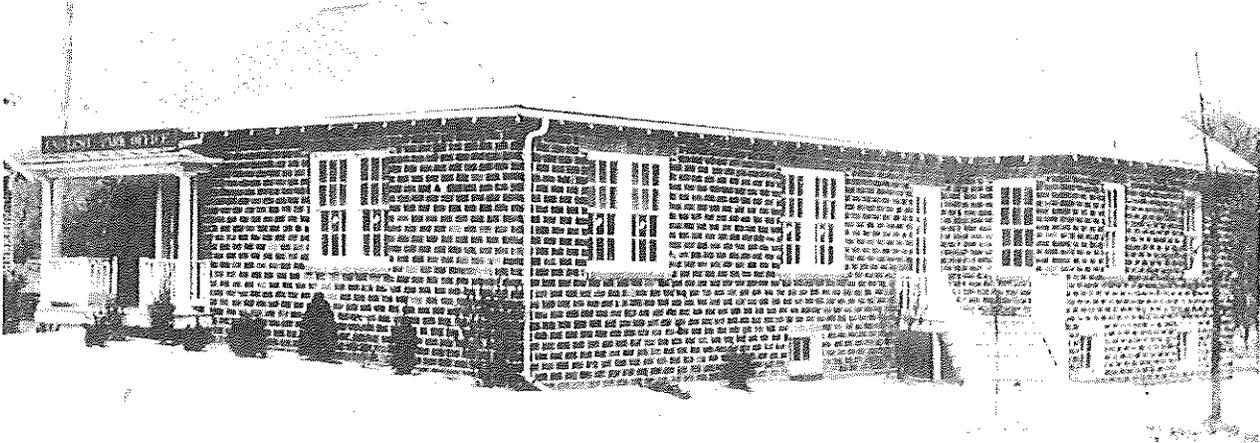
Brown



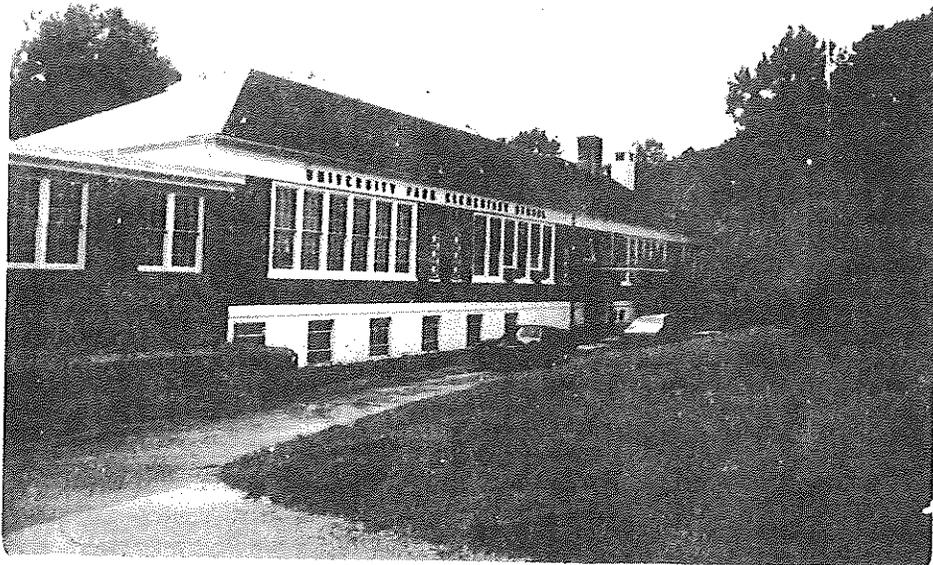
Bourne

Wells

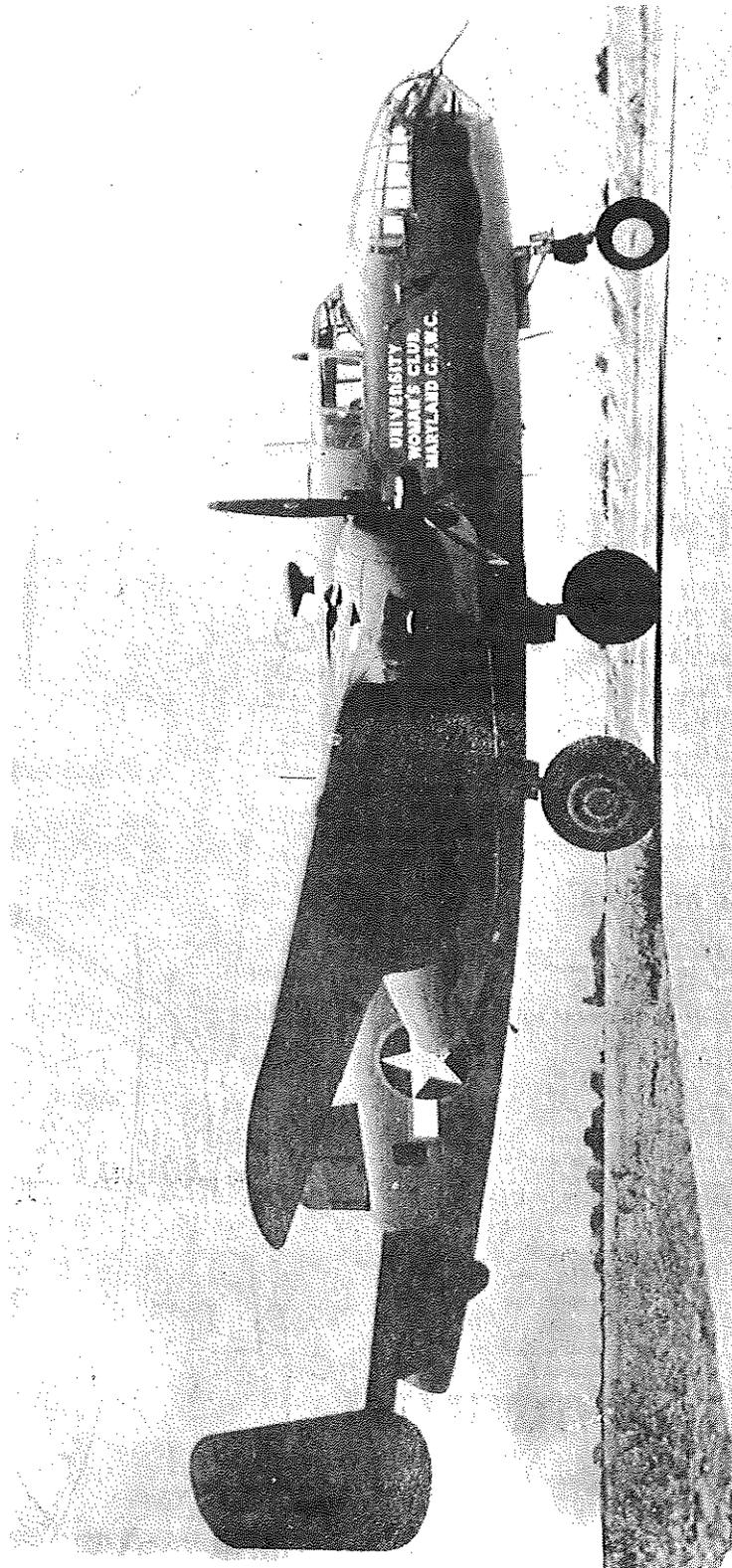




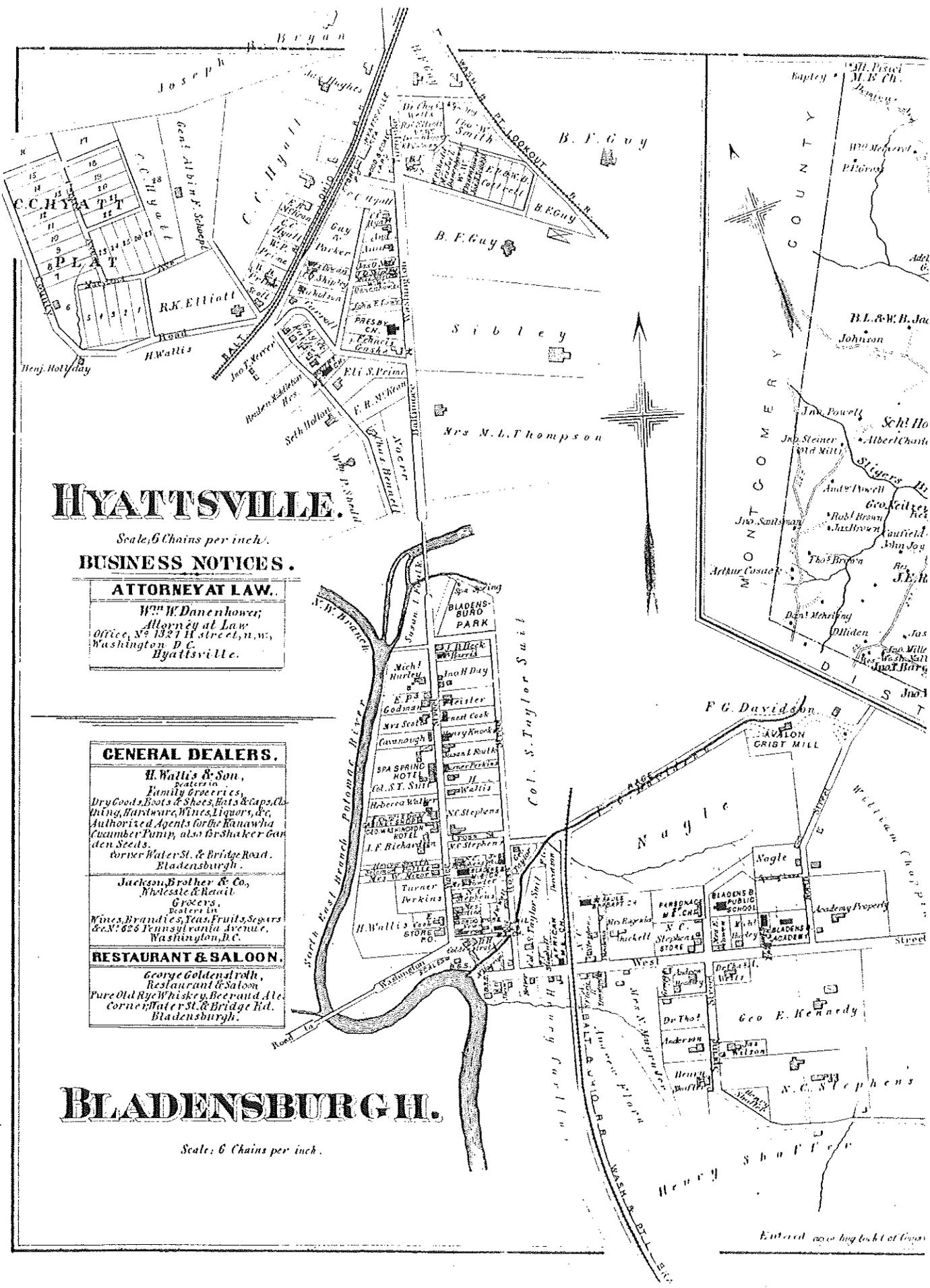
Notice the offices of the University Park Company on the corner of the building, 44th Avenue and Tuckerman Street. (Albrecht)



Soon to be replaced, this building has served the Town for more than forty-eight years. (Sparks)



A North American B-25, the "Mitchell Bomber," named for the University Park Women's Club (note the missing "Park") in recognition of the \$417,969 in war bonds which the Club solicited in 1943. (University Park Women's Club)



# HYATTSVILLE.

Scale, 6 Chains per inch.

## BUSINESS NOTICES.

### ATTORNEY AT LAW.

Wm W. Danenhower,  
 Attorney at Law  
 Office, No 1327 H street, n.w.,  
 Washington, D. C.  
 Hyattsville.

### GENERAL DEALERS.

H. Wallis & Son,  
 Dealers in  
 Family Groceries,  
 Dry Goods, Boots & Shoes, Hats & Caps, Clo-  
 thing, Hardware, Wines, Liquors, &c.  
 Authorized Agents for the Kanawha  
 Cucumber Pump, also for Shaker Gar-  
 den Seeds.  
 Corner Water St. & Bridge Road.  
 Bladensburgh.

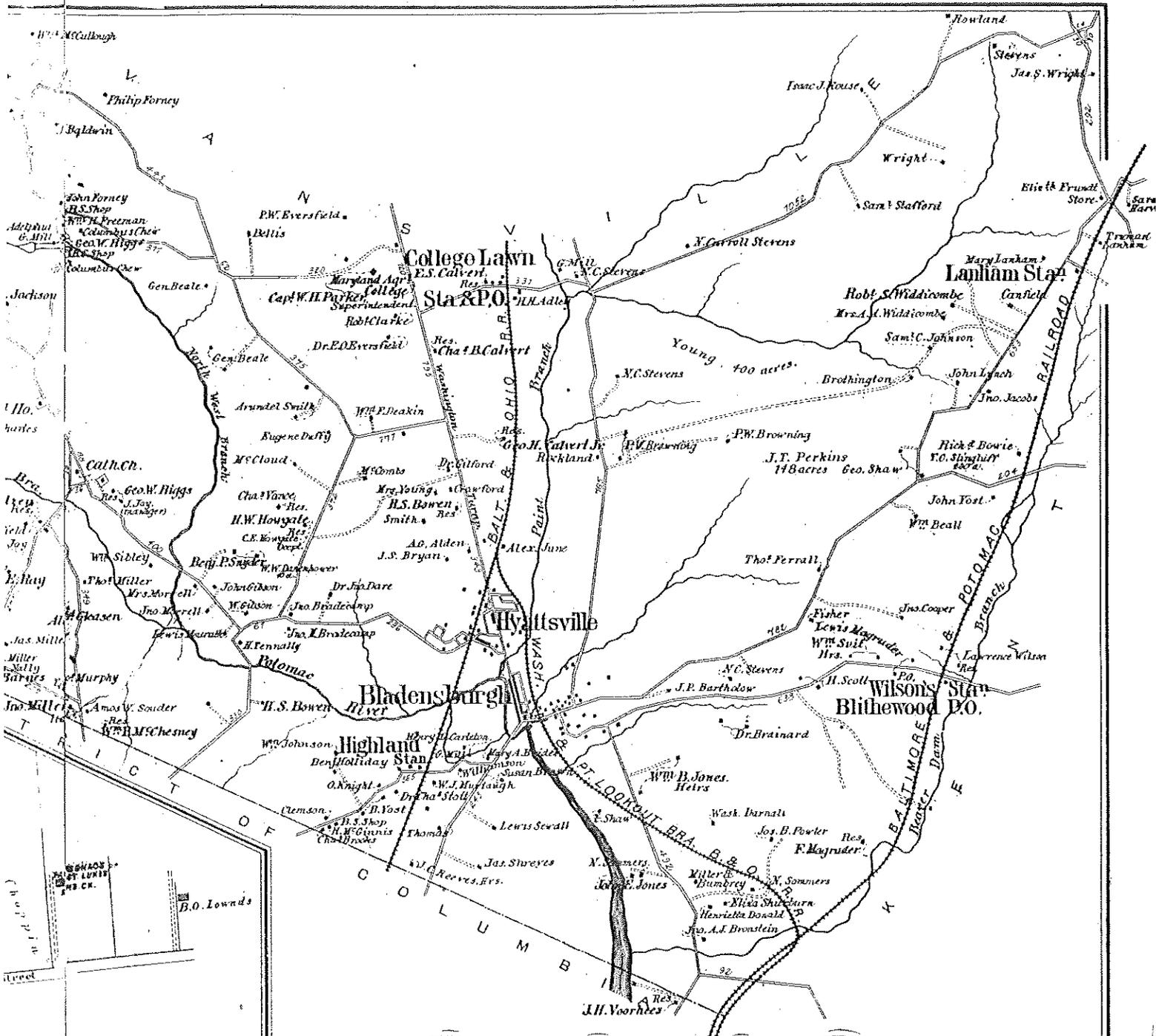
Jackson, Brother & Co.,  
 Wholesale & Retail  
 Grocers,  
 Dealers in  
 Wines, Brandies, Teas, Fruits, Segars  
 &c. No. 625 Pennsylvania Avenue,  
 Washington, D.C.

### RESTAURANT & SALOON.

George Goldenstroh,  
 Restaurant & Saloon  
 Pure Old Rye Whiskey, Beer and Ale  
 Corner Water St. & Bridge Rd.  
 Bladensburgh.

# BLADENSBURGH.

Scale, 6 Chains per inch.



# BLADENSBURG II DIST.

## No. 2

PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY,

Scale 2 inches to the Mile.

Note - Figures on the Roads represent the distance in rods from junction to junction.

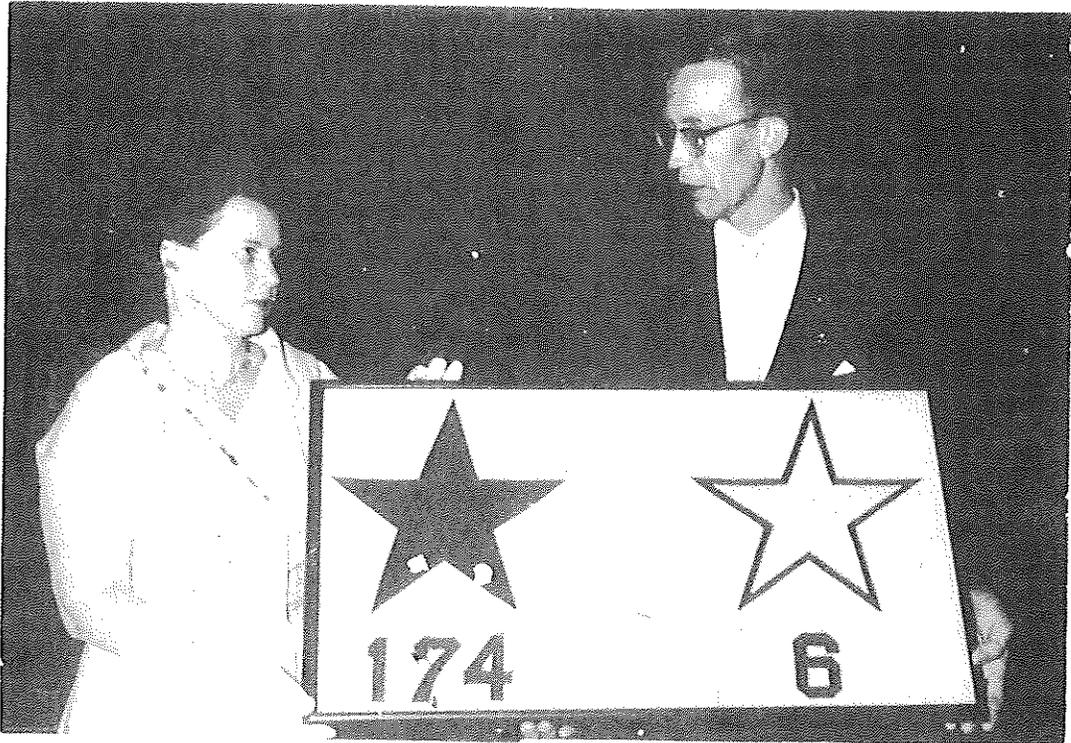
Conveys in Region 708 by G. H. Hopkins in the City of the Legislature of Congress at Washington.

## CLASS PICTURES -- A GREAT TRADITION

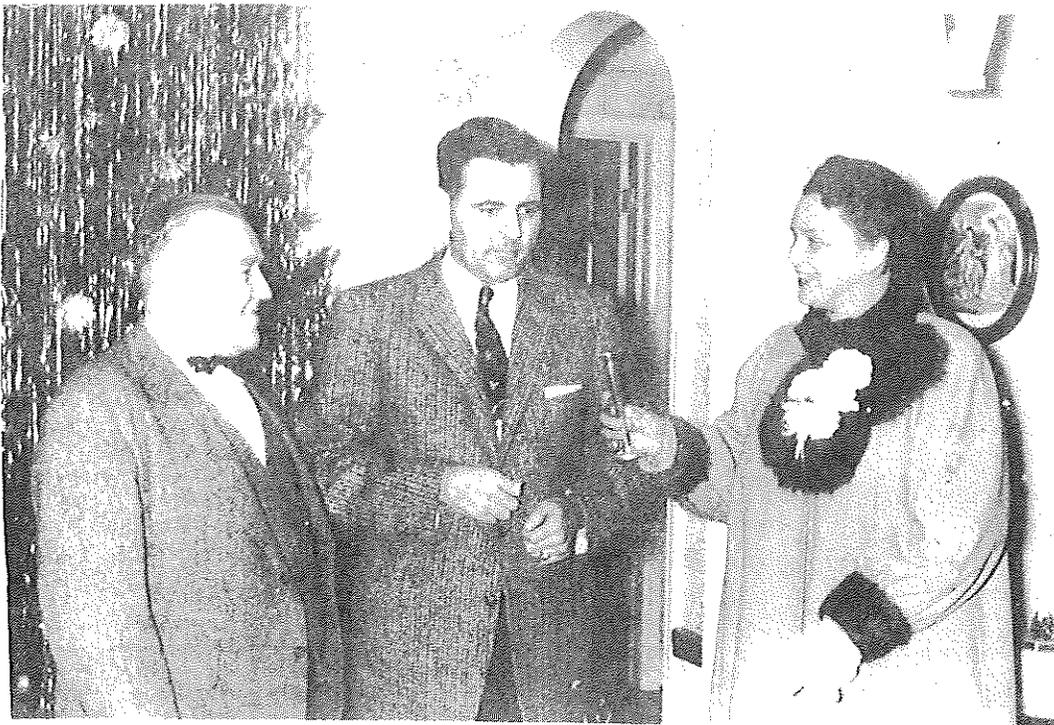


Above: the fourth and fifth grades in 1942. Note the absence of houses fronting on Underwood Street. (Zelany)  
 Below: one of several first grade classes in 1957. Do you recognize any of the young people? (Sparks)





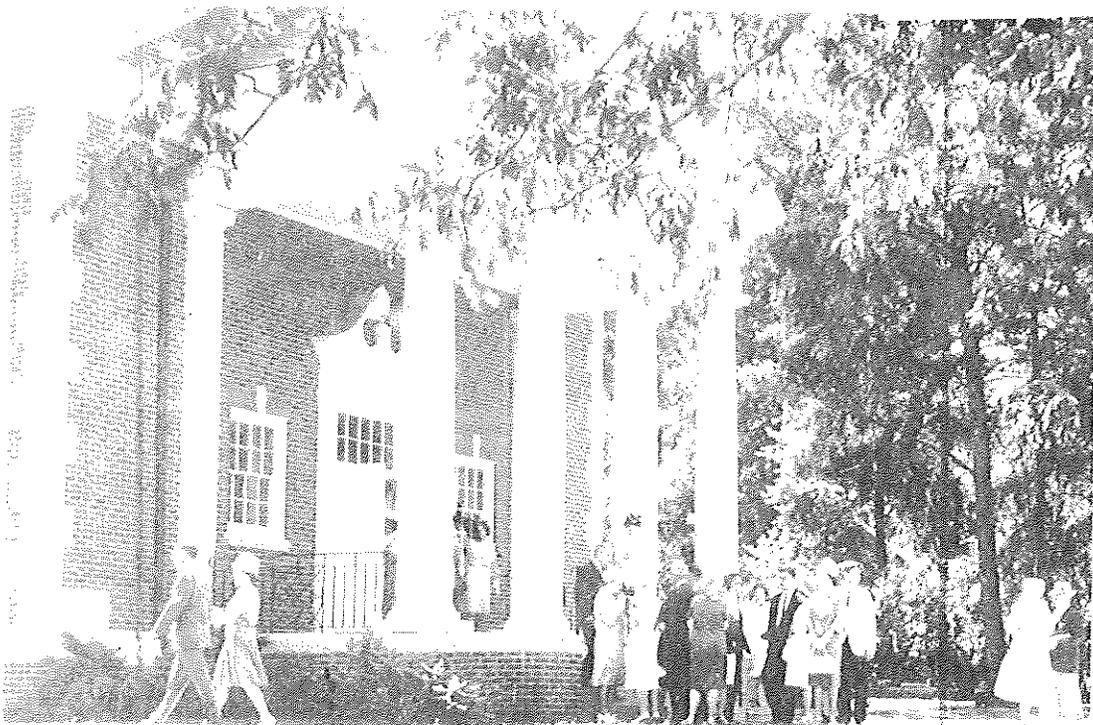
Above: President Wheatley of the University Park Women's Club presents the Town's service flag to Principal Jon Lloyd of the University Park Elementary School. Below: Mrs. Wheatley and Mayor Fox giving the 1955 First Prize for Christmas Decorations to resident Carroll Beatty. (University Park Women's Club)





The sanctuary of  
the Town's first  
church, the Church  
of the Brethren.  
(Sparks)

The end of another  
Sunday service, the  
Riverdale Presbyterian  
Church. (Church  
records)

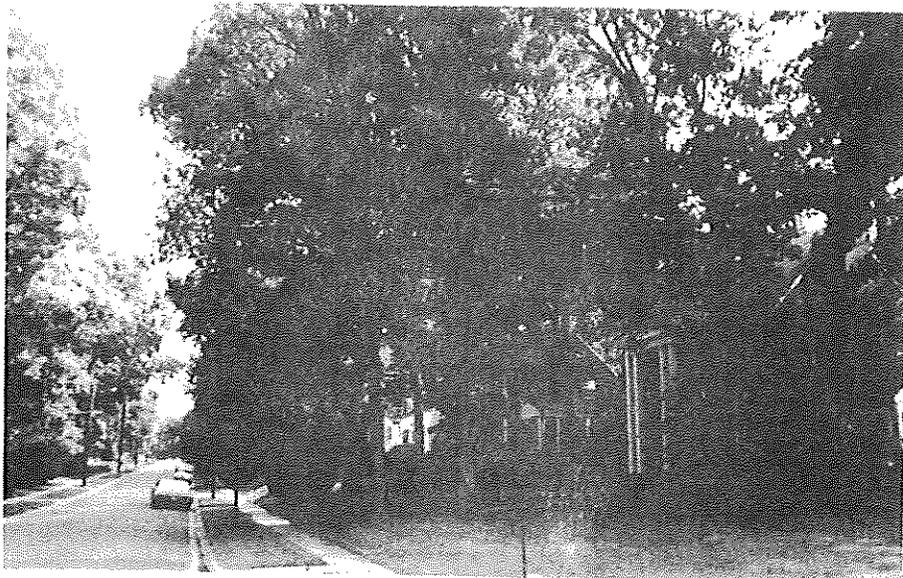


UNIVERSITY PARK  
TODAY (Sparks)



Left:  
The "Christmas Tree"  
Triangle.

Below:  
One of many shaded  
streets.



In terms of votes  
the Town's most  
popular mayor,  
Ruth Lutwack



and

the Town's most  
popular recreation:  
tennis.



concerns was the matter of upkeep (and, in some cases, the initial construction of), bridges, culverts, and turnarounds. The latter were often used by residents as extra parking space while the former were either vandalized or washed out by the perpetual floods. (Some of these were not entirely due to natural causes. In 1963 some bomb shelters erected along College Heights Drive set free an underground spring which immediately created a persistent pond near the parkway.)

Becoming equally expensive during the years was the job of removing the perpetual mound of trash. The initial crew of Brooks and Slim, plus one stake truck, which had handled the task in 1936 at an annual cost of \$1567, had grown to a crew of thirteen men, manning three vehicles, at an annual cost of about \$109,000 by 1975-76. With the ban on burning imposed by the Town in the mid-1960s (reinforced by a similar County ban), one of the Town's greatest assets became, during the fall season, one of its biggest headaches -- trees = leaves. After much make-do effort to handle them, the Council authorized the purchase of a Good Roads Champion Leaf Collector for \$5790 in November, 1963. Residents who wished could have a "full 14 cu. yd. load of partially mulched leaves" delivered to them. Leaves are still a major fall task of the Sanitation Crew despite the toll claimed by age, disease, and auto fumes.

By the mid-1960s, the damage to the community's oak trees from scale had reached such proportions that local specialists like Leland Scott were able to persuade the Town it should begin a program of spraying these trees with an oil emulsion as well

as instituting a similar practice in an effort to prolong the lives of the elms in the Park. The latter has been no more successful here than elsewhere in the nation as the dread Dutch elm disease takes its yearly toll. To keep the Town's streets green, the local government replaces damaged or dead trees regularly, planting an average of forty to fifty new trees a year, most of which are the famed Bradford variety of the calory pear tree. These, costing \$56 a planting in 1954 when they were put into the "Polinger" development, brought the Town a small measure of horticultural fame. As the first community in the nation to use the Bradford Pear, University Park received a number of inquiries in the 1950s from other towns looking for equally successful plantings. The pear trees, the pin oaks which by arrangement with the State Nursery located on the northern rim of the Maryland campus were planted along "his" streets by the elder Rimmer, and the gracious elms which so distinguished the Town's stretch of Queens Chapel Road -- all these, and others, required more and more tender loving care as the years passed.

An inevitable consequence of growth was the coming of "crime." It was, and is, the proud boast of early residents that the community was crime-free for its first decades -- not even a traffic violation. Whether or no, the community had considered the potential real enough to begin the practice of hiring special policemen for the Halloween season before the war. For several years an average of four policemen were paid a total of \$60 for patrolling the area during those evenings from 7:00 to 10:00 P.M. By the mid-1950s vandalism was a regular complaint

and speeding, especially on certain streets, was becoming one. At first these matters, if not dealt with personally, were left either to county police forces or to the councilmen themselves. The latter were honorary deputy sheriffs and for a number of years functioned as the chief guardians of law and order. In those years violators of the ordinances could obtain a hearing at the County Service Building every first and third Monday evening at 7:00 P.M. The efficiency of these local peace officers during the years defies determination but as recently as last year they were reminded that their badges could be used only if a felony were committed in their presence.

Whatever, two matters convinced the Town that peer enforcement was not enough to maintain the peace of the Park. The first was a growing number of "B&Es," burglaries (with an occasional hold-up like that reported in April, 1955). In November, 1956, the Council had "surveyed" the Town via a questionnaire which asked for approval of: an ordinance prohibiting dogs running at large; and a police force. There is no record of the results of the poll but at the next Council meeting, after the Council had defeated the dog ordinance by a voice vote of 4-3, "Councilman Bolinger moved that due to the fact that the dog ordinance was defeated that the Council not adopt an ordinance establishing a police force." Much of the early opposition to a regular police force probably derived from the fear of many residents that the increase in the tax rate that such would require would outweigh any benefits. Yet the number of burglaries grew, especially in Ward 2 where four were reported on Tuckerman Street alone in January of 1960.

The second matter, a more pressing problem for some, grew out of the great popularity in the 1960s of high school football games, especially those played at night. At the time night football games equaled lighted football fields which equaled Northwestern High School with the only one in the county. The affluence and permissiveness of the postwar generation of parents had already created a combustible combination: cars plus students. As early as 1954 residents in the area of the school were complaining to the Council about the overflow parking along Adelphi Road. Now there was parking congestion after school hours, too, plus potential violence.<sup>1</sup> The first reaction of the Town was to make the streets involved (those over which it had jurisdiction) one way; the second was to designate them "No Parking 7:00 to 11:00 P.M." on weekend nights, hiring four off-duty policemen to enforce the ruling. The latter practice continued until the Town's own police took over. (Imagine the consternation of the community when in 1962-1963 the County School Board decided to build its only school auditorium as an annex to Northwestern!)

Inevitably the time came when, after another "special" study of the situation, the Town hired its first policeman. In March, 1965, after being trained at the County Police Academy for twelve weeks, Richard Dunham was sworn in and immediately given authority to hire an assistant. Six months later, aided by a

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1. In 1965 two local boys were beaten up after a championship game between Northwestern and DuVal high schools. The Council promptly sent a letter off to the County School Board demanding a halt to the games.

Chevy Biscayne Sedan and a Sgt. Nolan, the "chief" was reporting, in an average month, 160 verbal warnings on traffic violations, 400 houses "checked," the return of truants to school (two in October of that year to Northwestern), and the apprehension of three (two local) juveniles for "breaking and entry."

Even though one resident appeared before the Council to protest the "police issuing tickets to raise revenue for the Town," most householders felt a greater sense of security, especially after the "force" reported that the recent rash of obscene phone calls (spring of 1966) had been brought quickly under control "with the apprehension of one of the local males." Still, vandalism and traffic problems continued to mount despite the addition of a third policeman. Not all cases of the former were as easy to deal with as one reported in the summer of 1967 which involved the stealing of flowers from a resident's flower bed "by a little old lady in a red bathrobe at 4:00 A.M."

Traffic problems were not unique to University Park but their growing occurrence within the boundaries of the Town was an irritant. Certain streets presented special hazards because they were used as short cuts to Adelphi Road, because they were too narrow, or because they had become a major county thoroughfare. In the first category, for example, there was the 6900 block of Pineway where five accidents, three involving injury, were reported in 1973 alone; in the second were, among others, Sheridan and Tuckerman streets (the oldest in the Town) which even the local fire departments maintained were too dangerous for their operations; and in the third category was, is, and

probably will be, Queens Chapel Road. In regard the latter the State Roads Commission has in recent years offered to turn the road over to the Town. The offer has not been seriously entertained in view of the failure of the Commission to repair the bridge and correct the defects of the culvert -- the source of so much trouble in containing the stream. Some of the Park's residents urged the acceptance of the road proposing that the Town then make it deadend by closing its East-West Highway access. The proposal, if not illegal, would involve complicated agreements with Hyattsville and Riverdale. At the moment the road remains the concern of the State and the bridge, once more, is promised a repair job -- soon. So Queens Chapel Road continues to be one of the major landmarks (and hazards) of University Park.

The maintenance of a town police unit was a sine qua non by the 1970s. Yet the quality and quantity of its services has become a matter of some debate in the last couple of years. Feeling helpless in the face of growing lawlessness in neighboring communities, many residents have felt that the police are either too lenient or too personal in their enforcement practices. Whether this is a genuine complaint, these are the years in which all law enforcement agencies, large or small, are under attack. The equitable enforcement of the law in a small community with an unusually large number of professionally trained<sup>1</sup> and "enlightened" middle class citizens would have demanded a quality of law officer that every community in the country was seeking

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1. It could be estimated conservatively that today one of every four householders in University Park has, at the least, a Ph.D. degree.

and for whom the salaries offered by the Town would have seemed less than challenging. The current government, well aware of the complexities of the situation, is in the process of upgrading salaries, spelling out the law (the first real codification of the forty-year accumulation of laws began in 1974 under the supervision of Councilwoman Farrell), and working, as many towns are, to improve citizen-police relationships.

The last few years have wrought many changes in the small community that began as an escape into the suburban woods of Hyattsville. One of them has consumed a growing portion of the Park's political energies: protecting the purely residential character of the Town in the face of the fantastic rate of urbanization of surrounding areas. The task has been an unending one. In 1948 the Town felt that character threatened by a proposal to construct a "Cross Town Highway" from Colesville Road<sup>1</sup> to Baltimore Blvd. via University Park. "Mass" meetings, petitions, and political action upon the part of the Town Council convinced the County Commissioners that the road was undesirable. They, in turn, forwarded the now joint opposition to the State Roads Commission and the project was finally abandoned.

Then in the 1950s and 1960s came the development of the Heurich properties. A successful brewer, Heurich had created a

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1. In 1961 the State changed the name of Colesville Road (citing confusion and duplication) to Adelphi Road. The Town Council objected strenuously but to no avail since the MNCP&P Commission would allow no hearings on the subject. University Park tended to ignore the change. That is, it did until 1965 when the Town capitulated after finding that residents along Adelphi Road were receiving no mail nor parcels unless they were "properly addressed."

summer retreat on a vast plot of land extending from the Northwest Branch to what was then known as the Bladensburg-Colesville Road. Its sale in 1951 let loose a bag of worms still entangled. Over the years the Town participated in a variety of zoning hearings and debates. At times it seemed as though the efforts were successful (see p. 39). But the suburban exodus was inexorable. Even muted complaints such as that of April, 1957 concerning the "precarious conditions" of the old farm buildings still left on the lot and of the wells and ponds still undrained (a local child had drowned in the Nine Pond) were ignored. The subsequent development of the tract brought both good and bad to the Town. The churches and library proved to be good neighbors; the Federal Building Complex (see p. 39) hemmed the community in a steel ring of cars; and the ultimate threat, perhaps not even contemplated in 1951, was the prospect of a high-rise apartment on the remaining space.

Not all the bordering areas have harbored such oppressive threats. While the high school continued to create difficulties affecting not only parking but also traffic patterns within the Town and, in many minds, serving as a source of local vandalism and minor crime, the County School Board was sympathetic -- even assuming the cost of the special police hired to protect parking space during the football seasons of the 1960s. The ban on night football following the disruptions of the late 1960s offered great relief. The University and College Heights Estates remain cooperative neighbors, within a sort of love-hate relationship. And, although the University Pedestrians' Association recently

lost its case against David McNamee and the Partridge Hill Company in an attempt to keep open a path peacefully used by Park residents for more than twenty years, such amicable relations are likely to continue.

The disposition of the land edging the Park on the northeast, along Baltimore Blvd. created a brief flurry of worry. But the Town was reassured about one of the parcels of land when John Sumpter and Charles Cover, in January, 1959, explained their plans for a professional building, including a sidewalk along the Blvd., for the two-acre lot north of Pineway. The fate of the strip south of Pineway remains in limbo. Originally belonging to the Seidenspinner interests, the site seemed, at least to that organization, an ideal spot upon which to locate an apartment building. Several times such a plan was defeated, either by petitions from residents in the neighboring Ward, or, in the last instance, September, 1958, by the refusal of the Town to grant a permit for it. By 1967 the property had passed into the hands of the University Baptist Church which briefly contemplated building a church on the ten lots involved. Whether discouraged by lack of adequate parking space or by other factors, the church chose a site on Campus Drive.

After 1960 the use of the Calvert-Cafritz tract to the southeast of the Town provoked some concern in University Park. Long a wooded area in which the local youth played, it had been largely ignored by the Town before that time. It suddenly became important when: (1) late in 1965 the Federal Government announced it would use some of the land for a Post Office

facility; (2) in 1974 the County School Board made public its plans to close both College Park and University Park elementary schools, combining them into a new one to be erected on Albion Road; and, (3) residents began to complain of assaults from a pack of "wild dogs"<sup>1</sup> living in the tract.

The postal facility was deemed no threat after a letter from Senator Tydings reminding the Council that the entrance/exit to the grounds was so planned as to cause no pressure upon existing traffic patterns in the area. The school controversy was settled, at least for the moment, by the decision to replace the existing University Park School with a modern facility -- even one which, as some parents proposed to the Board, would be an experiment in the use of solar energy. In view of the current squeeze upon County funds, it remains to be seen what happens. The dogs? They are still there though appropriate county agencies have been alerted to their presence.

University Park, both through its elected officials and through alert and civic-minded residents, has kept a weather eye on other developments in the area. In 1958 the Town made its views public in hearings on the mammoth Queens Chapel Road/East-West Highway/Adelphi Road intersection; in 1965 it joined the fight to prevent the building of a permanent revival hall for the Assembly of God Church on a Riverdale property along

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1. While both the County and the Town have ordinances requiring that all dogs be on leash when off the owner's property, the latter has, as some irate residents well know, no facilities for emergencies. Until such time as the Town has, in self-defense, a "pound" for both recalcitrant dogs and cats, residents have to rely upon County services.

East-West Highway; three times the Park unsuccessfully opposed a gas station finally built opposite Sheridan Street on Baltimore Blvd.; in 1967 representatives of the community participated at all levels in the planning for the widening of East-West Highway, jealous at every instant of the use of Town land without permission or adequate compensation; throughout 1973-74 the Park, through its Council, functioned as a very interested party in the disposition of what was called the "Von Ahm" property, at the corner of East-West Highway and Baltimore Blvd. which was sold to the Prince George's County Association for Retarded Children, Inc. As a result of State (1973) and County (C.B. 62) legislation, the Town was unable to restrict the use of the property which became a "half-way" facility (though not with outside fire escapes). More recently University Park has worked with other local groups calling for a consistent left-hand flight pattern at the historic, but unfortunately, nearby College Park airport.

The most immediate and damaging of the changes contemplated for nearby areas are those of the high-rise apartments planned by the Blumberg interest for the land near Northwestern High School and the Greenbelt Metro line. Finding the Board of Zoning Appeals not particularly sympathetic to the Town's opposition to the former, a group of residents, led by Leonard Lutwack and B. James Fritz formed a Zoning Coordinating Committee in the spring of 1973 to fight the project. Holding open meetings at the Presbyterian Church and at Northwestern, getting petitions signed, and soliciting funds, this group, with the aid

of \$7000 contributed by the Town Council to help meet legal costs, was able to force a "hold" on construction. Though still unresolved, the matter provided a rare occasion for the citizens of the Park to work together in a manner reminiscent of the community's earlier days.

Equally undecided is the question of the Greenbelt line. For several years most residents felt it would never materialize -- that Metro would fold or fade away -- that Queens Chapel Road could not, would not, be regarded as a vital link in the route to Greenbelt. But fold, Metro did not. By 1974 community concern had grown to such an extent that the new mayor, Ruth Lutwack, with others, was spending many hours either in writing or orally, representing the interests of the Park at a variety of meetings and hearings -- in each case stating the Town's opposition and urging consideration of alternative routes.<sup>1</sup>

By the mid-1970s University Park was feeling the effects of the changes wrought in the nation in the post-war years. The growth of the Park's population, creating the need for greater public services, had put pressure on financial resources.<sup>2</sup> The "times" and the suburbanization of surrounding areas had brought

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1. Obviously not all residents were opposed. One Councilman, without polling his Ward, insisted that Metro would be an asset to the community. However, a questionnaire sent out in May, 1975 showed 95% of those responding as opposed.
  2. The Town Council has long prided itself upon having the lowest tax rate of any of Maryland's towns (\$.55 per \$100 assessed valuation in 1976). Yet how long could this be continued without serious diminution of the quality of the services residents have long received and expect?

problems of crime, the beginning of urban blight,<sup>1</sup> assaults upon the ecology and aesthetics by six-lane thoroughfares, shopping centers, and rapid transit systems, and a breakdown in the homogeneity of the Town's original sociological structure. Even greater change may come soon since the 1970 census showed that an unusually high percentage (21% of the local residents) were officially "senior citizens." If, as newer residents moved into the Town, the general level of maintenance of residential property began to drop noticeably, streets became cluttered with unused cars and trucks, and other evidences of a general lack of concern with the physical "image" of the community appeared, there also came a refreshing, if very recent, politicization of the Town -- a willingness upon the part of more and more citizens to be citizens.

Interest in communal affairs should have been high in the early years, 1936-1950. In 1936 the Town held about two hundred houses, a number which had grown to 293 when the 1940 census allowed a more accurate count. With a population of 878 and a high percentage (95.6) of two-adult households, one might have expected at least a regular vote count, especially on matters

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1. Every street of the Town has always had that resident whose property might have been more natural along "Tobacco Road." Some have even been so disreputable that name and place are known in every corner of the Park. In 1974, in its report on the neighborhoods of Prince George's County, the Community Renewal Program pointed out a growing rate of deterioration in the "exterior conditions of houses and property" in University Park. At the time, the report listed five percent of the Park's residences already so categorized and eight percent as possessing "defects" serious enough to warrant consideration as "deteriorated" in a future survey.

referred to a special Town meeting or in those years in which mayors were chosen, in the neighborhood of 250 (or less than fifty percent of those probably eligible to vote).

While there are few records for the years before 1950, one might judge that many residents were content to let matters ride in view of the fact that: only sixteen votes were cast in 1943 and only thirty-one in 1944, re-electing Bourne mayor by twenty-nine of those votes; that only 77 voted in the 1944

referendum in regard to the annexation of College Heights; and only 277 people attended the mass meeting held to fight the proposed "Cross Town Highway" in 1949 (although the petition sent to the County Commissioners contained six hundred signatures).

Evidence of "voter apathy" during the period 1950-1973 is more substantial. In 1950 THE PRINCE GEORGE'S POST reported that

Howard Mooney had been elected mayor with 66 votes! By 1954 the total votes cast (another mayoralty year) rose to 185, the largest for that decade. Yet this was the decade of greatest growth for the Town. About three hundred houses were built during these years, bringing the total to 848, with a population of 3098 in 1960. The trend continued during the 1960s, with 258 voting in 1964, a peak year for that decade and until 1973 when only 173 went to the polls. This latter figure represented about one percent of those who must have been eligible to vote for the 1970 census counted a population of 3329 or 1048 households.

It would be impertinent to try to analyze the lack of political interest in a community of educated, trained and

affluent residents (in 1970 the Town's residents were reported to earn a median annual income of \$20,000 with 93% of the homes owner-occupied). It would be equally unwise to speculate about the reasons for the sudden interest and activity surrounding recent elections. In 1974, 645 people voted and in 1976, 507. Perhaps after all, it was evidence of the maturity of the community as well as the realization that University Park was no longer a problem-free refuge with shaded streets, well kept lawns, beautifully behaved and bright children, and congenial neighbors -- a never, never land. On the contrary, it was an enclave in an indifferent megapolis, with nowhere to go in terms of growth but a number of very fine things to preserve.

APPENDIX

- I. DEAKINS'S FAMILY TREE
- II. OFFICIALS OF THE UNIVERSITY PARK COMPANY, FROM A 1924 SALES BROCHURE
- III. COVENANT, A PART OF MOST EARLY SALES AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY PARK COMPANY AND BUYERS
- IV. MAP: THE TOWN TODAY
- V. TOWN OFFICIALS, 1976-1977
- VI. UNIVERSITY PARK BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE



## PERSONNEL OF UNIVERSITY PARK COMPANY, Inc.

THE officers and directors of the company are well known both in Washington and the local community, and are developing this suburb with far-seeing enterprise that will insure the value of investment here and to the perpetual delight of residence.

### OFFICERS

J. FRANK RUSHE, President  
E. HILTON JACKSON, Vice-President    GEO. H. LANHARDT, Second Vice-Pres.  
CLARA S. SHEPHERD, Sec.-Treas.    B. O. L. WELLS, Sales Manager  
P. O. Box 331, Hyattsville, Md.    P. O. Box 216, Hyattsville, Md.

### DIRECTORS

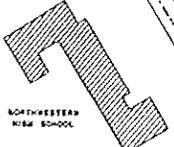
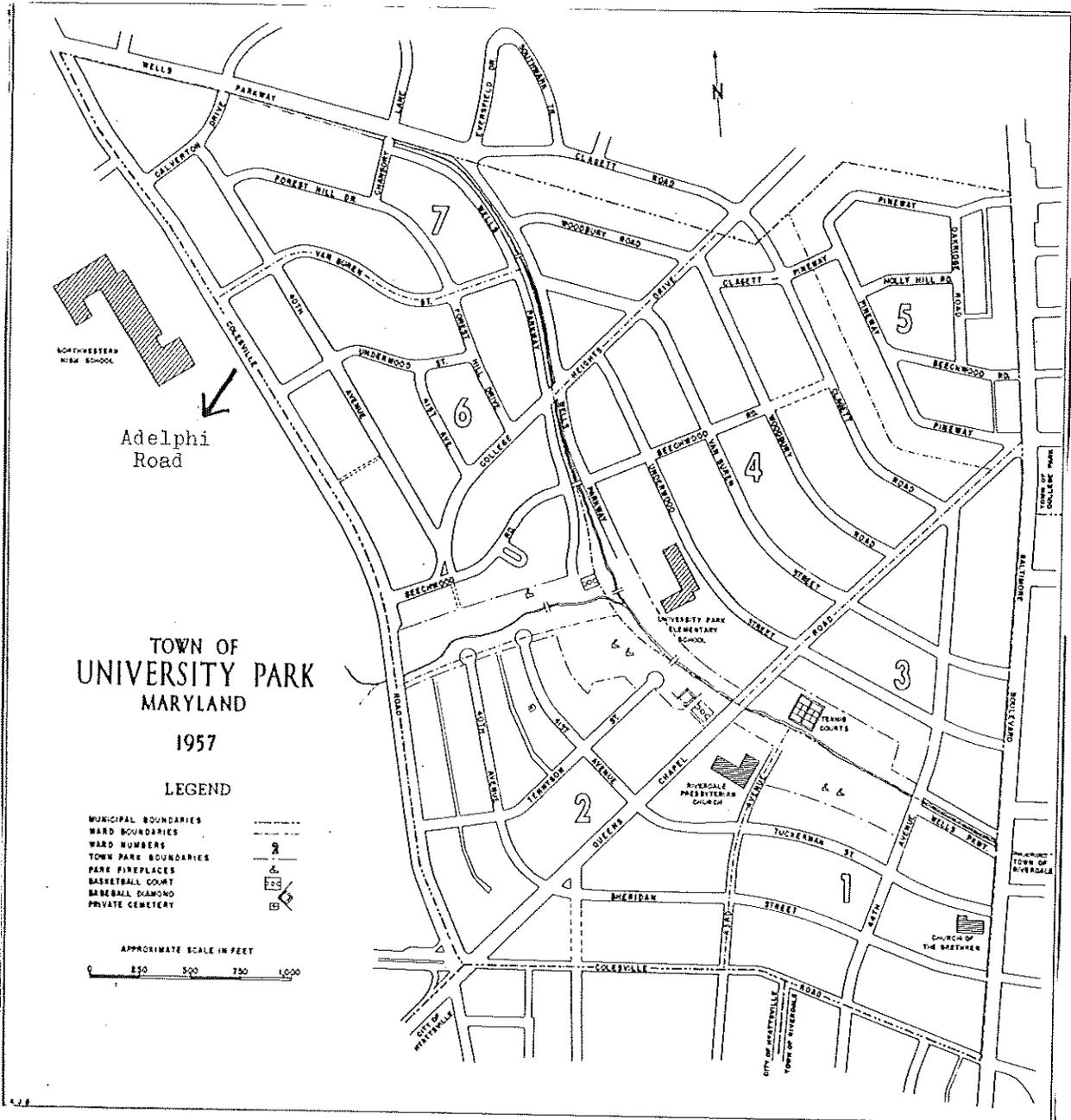
GEO. N. BOWEN  
CHAS. W. CLAGETT  
VINTON D. COCKEY  
E. HILTON JACKSON  
GEO. H. LANHARDT  
DR. H. J. PATTERSON  
W. D. PORTER  
JAS. H. RIMMER  
J. FRANK RUSHE  
E. QUINCY SMITH  
B. O. L. WELLS

UNIVERSITY PARK BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Mrs. Marian Edwards  
Mrs. David Broyles  
Mrs. Sylvia Earl  
Mrs. Willie Phillips  
Dr. Frank Cullinan  
Dr. John Lippert  
Dr. John Duffy  
Dr. Donald Piper  
Dr. Norman Steele  
Dr. Phyllis Sparks (Chairman)

COVENANTS imposed by deed from University Park Company, Inc., a Delaware corporation, dated August 1, 1938, recorded among the Land Records for Prince Georges County, Maryland, in Liber 516 at folio 340, conveying lots in "SECTION 6B - UNIVERSITY PARK."

1. That all buildings erected or to be erected upon the land hereby conveyed shall be built and used for residence purposes exclusively, except that garages may be built under or attached to brick or stone houses. All other outbuildings shall be erected upon the rear and not elsewhere upon said land, including garages for frame houses. All out-buildings and garages shall be used only in connection with said residences.
2. That the land hereby conveyed, or any building which may be erected thereon, shall not be used or permitted to be used for any trade, business, manufacturing or mercantile purposes, provided that community heating plants shall not be construed as within the terms of this covenant.
3. That the University Park Company, Inc., its successors, may from time to time designate lots in said section for churches, schools and business, and that the land so set aside may be sold free from the restrictions that it shall not be used for trade, business, manufacturing or mercantile purposes.
4. That no building shall be erected upon said lot within 25 feet of the street or avenue abutting same, beyond which the erection of any building, porch thereof or other structure of a permanent nature exceeding four feet vertically, is restricted.
5. That no residence shall be erected on the land hereby conveyed which shall cost less than \$5000.00.
6. That within the period of twenty years from the first day of August, 1923, not more than one residence shall be erected upon any one lot, as shown by the original plan of said subdivision, said residence to be designed and built for the occupancy of one family only.
7. That no apartment house, apartment houses or flats shall be erected upon the hereinbefore described land.
8. That said land, or any part thereof, or interest therein, shall never be rented, leased, sold, transferred or conveyed unto any negro or colored person.
9. That the plans and specifications showing the kind, shape and height of each house to be erected upon the land hereby conveyed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the grantor before the commencement of any building operation thereon. If the house proposed to be erected is, in the judgement of the grantor, not suitable to its site, is out of harmony with houses erected in its vicinity in said section, or will adversely affect the general character of the development of said section as a community of attractive homes, the grantor shall have the right to refuse to approve the plans and specifications.



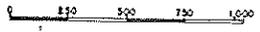
Adelphi Road

TOWN OF  
UNIVERSITY PARK  
MARYLAND  
1957

LEGEND

- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES
- WARD BOUNDARIES
- WARD NUMBERS
- TOWN PARK BOUNDARIES
- FIREPLACES
- BASKETBALL COURT
- BASEBALL DIAMOND
- PRIVATE CEMETERY

APPROXIMATE SCALE IN FEET



TOWN OFFICIALS

Mayor

Ruth Lutwack

Councilmen

Ward 1	Gloria Carter
Ward 2	John W. Callaghan
Ward 3	Charles E. Burkhead
Ward 4	Howard Woodworth
Ward 5	Ella Mae Lemon
Ward 6	David M. Granahan
Ward 7	Lawson Abrams

Town Clerk and Treasurer

Earl A. Miller

Town Counselor

Robert H. Levan, Esq.

Town Secretary

Marilynne E. Lazdusky

Town Engineer

Ben Dyer Associates  
(James H. Hummer)

Town Police

University Park Police Department  
John R. Colister, Chief

Park Board Chairman

Margaret Callcott

University Park News

Margie Niehaus