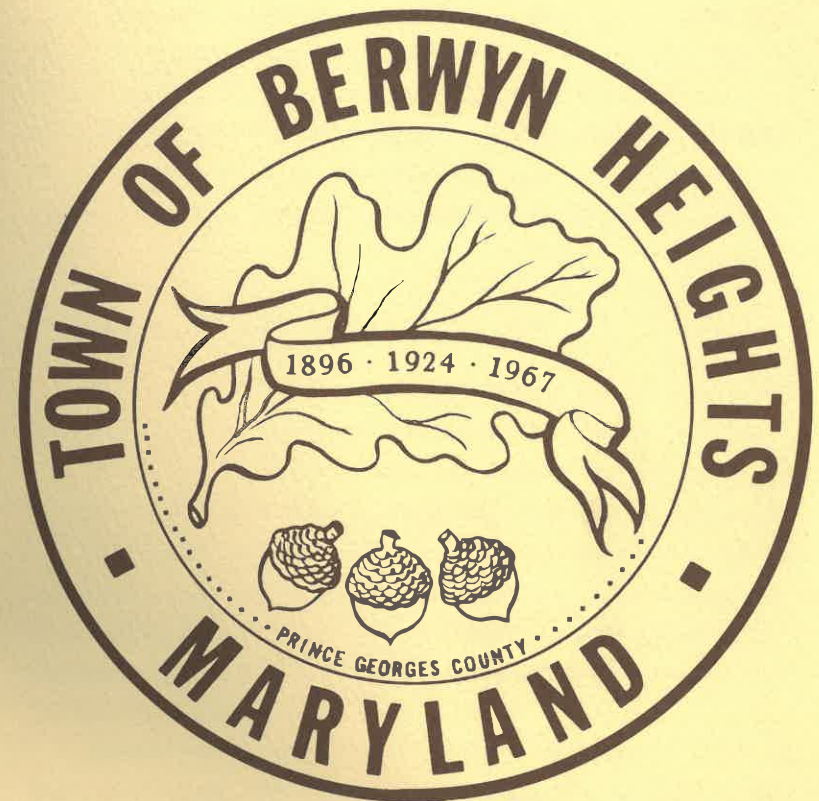


BERWYN HEIGHTS

HISTORY OF A SMALL MARYLAND TOWN



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THE FIRST RESIDENTS—THE AMERINDS

Indian artifacts found in Berwyn Heights and nearby areas indicate the presence in this area of native Americans as early as 6000 B.C. and continuing through 1500 A.D. Though they left no written history, lithic artifacts and debitage left behind provide some fragmentary information about those early residents. An intensive surface collecting archeological effort by Dennis Webb (Southwestern Chapter, Archeological Society of Maryland Inc.) has revealed prehistoric sites in the Paint Branch/Little Paint Branch/Indian Creek complex which span the Early Archaic Period (beginning 6000 B.C.) to the late Woodland Period (ending 1500 A.D.). Selected sites as recorded by him in the Maryland State Archives, together with materials found at each site and the period of prehistory are summarized here.

The Little Paint Branch Creek/Paint Branch Creek archeological sites are recorded as 18 PR 85 through 18 PR 89. Quartz and quartzite artifacts surface collected at sites 18 PR 85 and 18 PR 86 reflect habitation from 6000 B.C. to as late as 1500 A.D. Rhyolite artifacts, quartzite points and knife fragments also found at 18 PR 86 indicate that this was an Archaic camp site. Reddish quartzite, quartz, rhyolite and jasper artifacts including bifurcated base projectile points collected at site 18 PR 89 are characteristic of the Archaic Period.

The Indian Creek sites are recorded as 18 PR 90 through 18 PR 95. Artifacts collected at 18 PR 92 are mostly quartzite but some rhyolite suggests a long range habitation. Bifurcated base points collected at 18 PR 94 indicate Early Archaic Period habitation. A bannerstone, a weight for an atlatl, also found at this site suggests this to have been a camp site. Artifacts collected at 18 PR 95 indicate this to be a major Middle Archaic site.

Where did the Amerind get his materials? Quartz and quartzite were readily available from cobble stones found in nearby creeks. Rhyolite was probably transported from Maria Furnace, Pennsylvania quarries near the present Gettysburg. Soapstone or steatite material was probably traded or transported from the Piney Branch-Rock Creek Park quarries in the District of Columbia. The sources for jasper are unknown.

The residential development of Berwyn Heights along the north-south geological terrace facing Indian Creek destroyed many Amerind sites as evidenced by numerous artifacts being found in garden and flower plots subsequent to construction. Some artifacts were recently found in residential and street construction fill dirt transported to the Berwyn Heights football field. One of the most significant finds in Indian Creek, Berwyn Heights, was a notched net sinker, which indicates fishing as a part of the Amerind hunting-gathering existence. Knife blades and projectile points have been found in the nearby eroded edges and waters of the creek. However, few artifacts may now be found in Indian Creek due to the recent flood control measures and the straightening of its meandering path.

It is hoped that continued archeological research and effort will reveal additional information on the shadowy inhabitants of the land around Indian Creek—whose terrace provided a high, dry area from floods, whose water provided fresh water and a source of food, and where surrounding timbered areas provided shelter from prevailing winds. These people left no written record, only lithic artifacts and debitage that tell a story. The Amerinds were a people who existed by hunting and gathering, and who left this area before the first colonists arrived in Maryland.

THE MARYLAND COLONY

In the year 1632, King Charles I of England granted a charter ceding all of the lands which later became the State of Maryland to Cecilius (Cecil) Calvert, second Lord Baltimore and first Lord Proprietary of the Province. The liberal charter included all of the lands bounded on the north by the fortieth parallel, on the west by the meridian line from this parallel to the most distant fountain of the Potomac, thence southeast by the right bank of the Potomac to the Chesapeake Bay and thence northwardly to the Delaware Bay and river to the fortieth parallel. It included all of the present State of Delaware, a large tract now forming part of Pennsylvania, and a smaller tract now a part of West Virginia. The Maryland Charter was by far the most autonomous charter granted by the Crown providing for self-government administered by the Lord Proprietary with full participation by the freeman of the Province. Calvert was authorized to grant lands to the free colonists as he saw fit subject only to allegiance to the Crown. Token payment for this huge tract of land was specified as two Indian arrows to be delivered annually to Windsor Castle and one-fifth of the gold and silver mined in the Province. The Province was named Mary Land in honor of Queen Henrietta Maria of England.

On November 22, 1633 two small ships owned by Lord Calvert, the Ark and the Dove of 300 tons and 50 tons respectively, set sail from Cowes on the Isle of Wight for the new Maryland Colony. The ships were under the command of Leonard Calvert, younger brother of Cecil Calvert, who was designated also as the first Governor of the colony. According to Leonard Calvert's own journal the voyagers numbered approximately 320 including his brother George Calvert, 15

other gentlemen, 3 Jesuit missionaries and 300 laboring men. The "gentlemen" were Catholics while the "laboring men" were indentured servants of various religious persuasions but mostly Protestant (Anglicans). The gentry were referred to as freemen or freeholders and as such enjoyed many privileges not shared by the servant class including the rights to hold office and to own land. The Calverts meant to model the Maryland Colony after English feudal society with one important exception, that of religious freedom and tolerance; the transplanted manor system thrived here better and longer than in any other new world colony.

After brief stopovers at Barbados to take on provisions and at Point Comfort, Virginia to confer with the Virginia colonists, the Ark and the Dove entered the Chesapeake Bay and on March 15, 1634 dropped anchor at St. Clements Island where the first Maryland landing was made and possession of the Province of Maryland was formally taken.

Since many well armed Indians were in evidence, St. Clements Island was chosen as an appropriate site to establish a base. The first meeting between Leonard Calvert and the Emperor of the Piscataways, surrounded by 500 of his bowman, was held at the Piscataway village at the head of Piscataway Creek on the south bank about one-half mile east of the present Farmington Landing. Emperor Opechancanough had succeeded his brother Powhatan as Chief of the Indian Confederacy and was the ruler of all the Indian tribes in the southern Maryland area. Every effort was made to establish friendly relations with the Indians and in this effort Father Andrew White, a Jesuit missionary and a historian, played a decisive role. Rigid rules of conduct were enacted and enforced; these included an absolute ban on provision of either alcohol or firearms to the Indians, and fairness in trading with them.

Calvert negotiated the purchase of part of the homes in the Indian town of Yoacomaco, present site of St. Mary's City, as well as adjoining tobacco and corn plots. Here the colonists proceeded to construct the first permanent settlement in the Maryland Colony.

The Indians of southern Maryland proved to be unusually friendly and peaceful; they had a well organized and highly developed social order. They had large permanent settlements surrounded by cultivated land where they grew corn, tobacco, gourds and other food supplies. Local Indians as well as the early European settlers were often the victims of raids conducted by the Susquehannocks, a powerful warlike tribe from the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River. Yet as the colonists expanded ever deeper into the Indian lands, conflicts developed at an increasing rate until in 1669 an agreement was reached under which a reservation was set aside for the exclusive use of the Indians. This land along the Potomac River, between Mattawoman and Piscataway Creeks, was designated as the refuge of the tribes of Piscattoway, Anacostanck, Doag, Mikiwoman, Mansquesend, Mattawoman, Chingwowoteick, Nangemaick, Portobacke, Sacayo, Pangayo and Choptico. It is evident that confinement to this reservation was not fully accepted by many of the proud free-ranging Indians as evidenced by the record of continuing incidents.

A 1723 account tells something of how the Maryland Indians were viewed by many of the European colonists:

They are inclined toward cruelty and bloodshed, quick to anger. Among themselves, they are divided, lead wars and destroy one another; they are also cunning, superstitious and jealous: in other words they are unpolished savages. [Translated from the German "New-eroffnetes Amphi-Theatrum. Erfurt 1723]

Father Andrew White however, who perhaps knew the Indians better than anyone else, had this to say:

The race are of a frank and cheerful disposition, and understand any matter correctly when it is stated to them. They have a keen sense of taste and smell, and in sight also surpass the English. They are especially careful to refrain from wine or warm drinks, and are not easily persuaded to taste them. They take pleasure in our society. They run to us of their own accord, with a cheerful expression on their faces, and offer us what they have taken in hunting and fishing: sometimes they bring us food, and oysters boiled or roasted.

After the Lord Proprietary's governing rights were rescinded in 1692, the reserve was continued under Articles of Peace and Amity between Their Majesties King William and Queen Mary on the one hand and the Emperor of Piscataway, King of Mattawoman, and King of Choptico on the other hand. Despite sincere efforts by both colonial and Indian leaders to co-exist peaceably, cultural differences were great and European diseases took a heavy toll on the Indians; the result was the emigration of entire tribes to the areas north and west. By 1738, a brief hundred years after the arrival of the first colonists, there were no more Indian tribes known to be residing in Maryland.

Unlike the Massachusetts colony, the Maryland Colony prospered from the start; the original colonists were joined by others from England and the colony expanded. Early records, which are incomplete, record only two other shiploads of colonists arriving between 1634 and 1660, the Merchant Adventurer and the Unity. After 1660 many such arrivals are recorded. Land grants to the early freeholders consisted of a minimum of 1000 acres each and many such manoral estates were created. The size of land grants was later reduced as the

supply of choice land diminished. By law of 1640 as the indentured servants completed their period of servitude, usually three to five years, they too were given 50 acre tracts of land together with supplies and provisions. They were then reclassified as freemen with all rights and privileges attendant thereto. As the supply of indentured servants dwindled new sources of labor were sought. One source was convicts from England, many of which were brought here between 1660 and 1690; the other source was slaves.

Early records of slavery in Maryland leave much to be desired, but it is known that slavery was introduced into the Virginia Colony as early as 1620. Some of those slaves were purchased by Marylanders but later slave traders brought slaves directly from Barbados and Guinea to the Maryland colony. Growing concern about the vast numbers of convicts and slaves being introduced to the colony prompted the Legislature in 1663 to regulate the relations between master and slave. In 1704 the slave population was tabulated as 4,475, by 1720 it was in excess of 25,000. Finally in 1783, the Maryland Legislature passed a law absolutely prohibiting the further importation of slaves. In 1796, a legislative act permitting masters to free slaves was passed. By the start of the Civil War more than half of the blacks in Maryland were classified as freeman.

Initially, the commerce of the colony was limited essentially to furs, forest products, dried fish and corn. As lands were cleared, tobacco rapidly assumed the dominant position in colonial commerce. So important did tobacco become to the economy of the colony that in 1732 it was established as legal tender at one penny per pound; it was commonly accepted as a medium of exchange for over a century. Mining and smelting of iron ore became the first major non-agricultural industry in the colony in the 1730's and was a primary factor in the early development of the Baltimore area.

The Maryland Colony was almost destroyed in the winter of 1644-45 when Captain Richard Ingle, a rebel parliamentarian and pirate, arrived in Maryland with an armed ship, The Reformation, and a motley crew of buccaneers. Since Governor Calvert was in Virginia at the time, the colonists lacked an effective leader making it easy for Ingle and his crew to seize control of St. Mary's City. They plundered the city and surrounding plantations effectively taking control of the Maryland Colony. For two years the marauders held possession of the colony, pillaging and destroying that which could not be confiscated. When Ingle returned to England to sell his booty, Captain Cornwaleys arrested and imprisoned him. Meanwhile, Governor Calvert gathered an armed force of volunteers from the Virginia colony and in the spring of 1646 returned to Maryland. He easily regained possession of the province, thus ending a brief but tragic period in the history of Maryland.

Governor Nicholson decided in 1694 to move the State Capital from St. Mary's to a more central location. A site on the Severn River, then Ann Arundel Town, was selected and the capital city of Annapolis was established. Gov. Nicholson took an active part in planning the city.

Religious freedom in Maryland suffered a severe setback in 1702 when Governor Seymour banned Quakers and Catholics from holding office or celebrating mass. Thus Protestantism became the only state sanctioned religion and persecution of Quakers became so virulent that many of them fled from the state.

Horse breeding and racing became a popular gentlemen's sport in 1741 through the influence of Governor Samuel Ogle who imported many prized thoroughbreds from England and the continent. Maryland-bred horses long dominated thoroughbred horse racing throughout the nation.

The Maryland Declaration of Rights and Constitution of 1776 officially changed the status of Maryland from a Province to that of a State; hence, the Nation's Bicentennial year of 1976 is also the Bicentennial of the Statehood of Maryland. Statehood soon brought about a change in the method of taxation when in 1777 the value of real and personal property of the head of the household became the basis of tax assessment. Previous to this time tax assessments were based on the number of taxables. Taxables were defined as all free males 16 years and over, all male servants 16 and over, and all slaves, both male and female, 16 and over. Excepted were those receiving alms and clergymen.

History does not do justice to the Calverts; no other State of the Union owes so much to one family as Maryland does to the Calverts who devoted their lives, fortunes and consummate statesmanship to the founding and direction of the State. George Calvert, the First Lord Baltimore, had the dream; his son Cecilius Calvert, Second Lord Baltimore, formulated the plans; and Cecilius' brothers Leonard and George executed the plans. Charles and Philip, sons of Cecilius, continued to guide the destiny of the State through troubled times.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

The first county created in the Province of Maryland was St. Mary's County in 1638. No boundaries were established and the county is assumed to have included the entire inhabited area of the Province at that time. During the intervening years nine other counties were created.

At a session of the General Assembly of the Province held at Annapolis on May 8, 1695, an Act was passed entitled "An act for the Division and Regulating Severall Counties within this Province and Constituting a County by the name of Prince George's County within the same Province." The Act further stated that "the Land from the upper side of Mattawoman and Swanson's Creek and Branches Extending upward bounded by Potomock on the West and Patuxent River on the East shall be and is hereby Constituted founded and Incorporated into a county of this Province and shall be Denominated, Called and known by the name of Prince George's County and shall from and after the said twenty third day of Aprill next Ensuing being St. George's Day . . ."

Thus on April 23, 1696 Prince George's became the eleventh County of the Province and became the new western frontier County including all of the land draining west into the Potomac River from Mattawoman Creek north to the Pennsylvania line and the land draining east into the Patuxent River between Swanson's Creek and the forks of the Patuxent. The county was named for Prince George of Denmark who had married Princess Ann in 1690, later Queen Anne of England. The population of the county at that time is unknown but the number of taxables was 658 which would lead to a reasonable estimate of the total population at between 1600 and 1700.

Mount Calvert, located at the junction of Western Branch and the Patuxent River, was a thriving center of trade at the

time of the creation of Prince George's County and was selected as the seat of the county government. The General Assembly changed the name of the community to Charles Towne and appropriated the Mount Calvert Church to serve as the courthouse and seat of government for the new county.

Over the next 25 years Charles Town declined as a center of commerce and in 1721 the county seat was moved to Marlborough which was more accessible to a majority of the residents of the county. Marlborough had been founded in 1706 and was named for John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough. Today only one brick house which dates back to this period still stands at the mouth of the Western Branch overlooking the Patuxent River. This house is now known as Mount Calvert, a designated historical site, owned and restored by D. E. Brown, Jr. All other traces of Charles Town have long since disappeared.

In 1748, when the number of taxables in the county had reached 6624, the Maryland General Assembly passed two acts to divide the county. The first was entitled "An Act for taking off Part of Prince George's County, and Adding it to Charles County." The act stated that the land bounded "by a Line drawn from Mattawoman Run in the Road commonly called the Rolling Road, that leads from the late Dwelling Plantation of Mr. Edward Neale through the lower Part of Mr. Peter Dent's Dwelling Plantation, until it strikes Potomack River, at or near the bounxed Tree of a Track of Land whereon John Beall Junior now lives (standing on the Bank of the aforesaid River at the lower End of the aforesaid Beall's Plantation) then with the River to the Mouth of Mattawoman Creek, should become of Charles County." The second act created the new Frederick County with a dividing line "Beginning at the lower Side of the Mouth of Rock Creek, and thence by a straight Line joining at the East Side of Seth Hyatt's Plantation to Patuxent River." Except for the land

to be given later to the Federal Government to create the District of Columbia, Prince George's County was now reduced to its present size.

In 1791 the States of Maryland and Virginia ceded the territory comprising the original District of Columbia to the Congress of the United States as the seat of the Federal Government. The major portion of this 10 mile square district came from Prince George's County which continued to administer the area for nine more years until Congress officially took possession of the District of Columbia in 1800. Thus Prince George's County was again reduced in size and the present boundaries encompassing 486 square miles were established.

Prince George's County has a rich historical heritage rivaling that of any county in the nation. Fortunately, many of the historic sites have been preserved as monuments to our past. The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, in collaborating with the Maryland Historical Society and the Prince George's County Historical Society, has compiled a list of 186 historic sites within the county. They are structures and places that have historical significance and include houses, churches, mills, graveyards, battlefields, archaeological sites, etc. One of these sites is a home in Berwyn Heights which will be described in a later section.

Of the more than 25 historic houses in the county, a few merit special mention. "Montpelier," near Laurel on the old Bowie Road, was the home of Major Thomas Snowden who greatly aided the cause of the American Revolution and was a personal friend of George Washington. The house was built about 1740 on land acquired much earlier by his grandfather Richard Snowden, known as "The Ironmaster". Nearby is another Snowden home called "Snow Hill". "Belair" mansion was built for Samuel Ogle, who later became Governor, in 1745-6. It now houses the offices of the City of Bowie.

"Riversdale," often referred to as the Calvert Mansion, was built by Baron Henri Hoesep de Stier, a Belgium aristocrat, for his daughter Rosalie who had married George Calvert. Upon the return of the Baron and his wife to Belgium, the Calverts took possession of Riversdale in 1803. The Rossborough Inn, on the University of Maryland campus, was on the 428 acre plantation of John Davis, called the Ross Borough Farm. This was purchased by George Calvert in 1822.

Historic Episcopal churches in the county include St. John's at Broad Creek, St. Paul's at Baden, St. Barnabas at Leeland, St. Matthews at Seat Pleasant and St. Thomas at Croom. Whitemarsh Church (Catholic) was built in 1742 and rebuilt in 1856. The Bicentennial year appears to be an especially appropriate time to seek out and visit some of these reminders of our legacy.

Historic events which shaped the development of our area of Prince George's County include:

The Washington-Baltimore Turnpike, now U.S. Route I, was incorporated under Act of the General Assembly in 1812. It was originally a toll road and the main stagecoach route to the north of Washington.

The 1827 charter granted by the Maryland General Assembly to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company authorized the construction of a railroad between Washington and Baltimore. Construction was started in 1828 and completed in 1832. The first telegraph line in the nation was installed along this railroad by Samuel F. B. Morse in 1844, and along this line the first telegraph message in the United States was transmitted. A plaque commemorating that event stands beside the tracks in Branchville.

The Maryland Agricultural College was established under charter in 1856 as a privately owned institution. The land

with Inn was purchased from George Henry and Charles Benedict Calvert—sons of George Calvert—and the Inn became the first agricultural college in the United States. Charles B. Calvert was an ardent and successful agriculturalist. He was the first president of the trustees of the college. In 1914, control of the college was taken over by the State of Maryland and in 1916 the name was changed to Maryland State College. In a 1920 Act of the Maryland Legislature, the institution became the University of Maryland.

In 1909 the U.S. Army Signal Corps initiated an aviation program. An Army balloonist, Lt. Frank P. Lahm, was assigned to select a site for a flight training school in the Washington area. He surveyed the area from the air by balloon and selected the site of the present College Park Airport for the school. An interesting sidelight was that when the Army Signal Corps took over the site, they found Rexford Smith already established there in aviation. Mr. Smith had already built his own plane which he successfully flew from the site in 1909. The first Army training plane was purchased from the Wright Brothers, and Wilbur Wright was hired as the first flight instructor. The Army Signal Corps lease on the field expired in 1913 and was not renewed. Another historic event occurred at the field in 1918 when the College Park Airport was made the Washington terminus for the first scheduled air mail route in the world, linking Washington to Philadelphia and New York. The College Park Airport has continued in operation by private groups and individuals to the present.

The first post office in the area was established in November 1890 on what was then Central Avenue, west of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Although not located in the Charlton Heights subdivision, it was designated the Charlton Heights Post Office. The name was changed to Berwyn Post

Office in 1896. A Charlton Heights postmark would to-day be a philatelic rarity.

Originally known as Scagg's Crossing, then Scaggsville, Branchville was one of the first commercial centers in the area. It was a stagecoach station with inn, general store and post office.

The Muirkirk Iron Furnace was established in 1847 by Andrew and Elias Ellicott. It was modeled after and named for an iron furnace in Muirkirk, Scotland. It produced a high grade of iron and during the Civil War produced both cannon and shot. It is believed that some of the iron ore processed by the furnace was mined in Berwyn Heights. The furnace closed in 1920.

The only early land grant in the immediate area was a 188 acre grant to Isaac Walker in 1754. This grant became the site of his home "Toaping Castle" which was located just north of Greenbelt Road. Over the years Isaac Walker and his family added to their holdings until they owned much of the area that now included Berwyn Heights, Branchville and Greenbelt.

The George Washington House of Bladensburg, long known only as the Brick Store, was constructed between 1755 and 1765 and operated originally as a store. Throughout its long and colorful history it served as a store, tavern and hotel and hosted many notable travelers of the day. From 1774 through at least 1783 a store and tavern were operated in the building by Peter Carnes who has the little known distinction of making the first recorded "Aerostatic Balloon" flights in this country. Some of his early tests of the balloon were carried out in a field three miles north of Bladensburg

which raises the interesting speculation that those test flights could have been conducted in Berwyn Heights.

CHARLTON HEIGHTS

Prior to 1886 the area that is now Berwyn Heights, was a rural area of farms and land holdings having no local government or affiliation. Some of the major property owners at that time were Gen. Edward C. Carrington (who had a farm and orchard of some 150 acres including the area known as "Sportland"), Mary R. Stewart, the Joiner sisters, (Ada J. and Fannie E. and Joanne M.), James T. Walker and James E. Waugh.

During 1886 and 1887 James E. Waugh and David H. Lamb individually began buying property in the area, Waugh in the southern half and Lamb in the northern half.

On December 10, 1887, two deeds were recorded which made Edward Graves the owner of virtually all of the property which later became the town of Berwyn Heights. The first conveyed from David H. Lamb and his wife Mary A. to Edward Graves for the sum of \$30,843.75 three tracts of land together comprising 247 acres. This land is presently bounded by Edmonston Road, Greenbelt Road, the B & O Railroad, and roughly at a line on the south at Pontiac Street. The south boundary was in part the property line of General Carrington's farm. Previous owners of portions of these tracts are recorded as James T. Walker, Mary R. Stewart and Ada J. Joiner. Excluded was a one acre church lot of Haddaway Chapel. One of the tracts was then known as Ore Bank Farm, Greenbelt Road was referred to as the road running from Branchville to Toaping Castle (the Isaac Walker estate), and Edmonston Road was referred to as a county road from Dr. Cook's to Bladensburg. This is the oldest known road in the area having been opened prior to 1720. At one time there was a toll gate where it intersects what is now Berwyn Road but it is not clear whether Edmonston Road was a toll road or the toll gate controlled access to the Washington Baltimore turnpike at Berwyn Road.

The second deed of the same date, conveyed from James E. Waugh and his wife Sarah V. to Edward Graves for the sum of \$17,062.50 three other tracts of land containing a total of approximately 146 acres. The first tract was one of some 150 acres known as "Sportland" less the 28 acres comprising the farm of Gen. Edward C. Carrington—this tract had been purchased in 1874 from Gen. Carrington by Ada J., Fannie E., and Joanne M. Joiner. Recorded both as Joiner and Joyner in various deeds, the sisters are referred to as a widow and two single sisters. Although they owned large tracts of land in the area prior to 1887, little else is known of them. A Miss Elsie Joyner who conducted a school of Religious Education in the area during the 1890s was probably a relative. The second was a ten acre tract purchased by Mr. Waugh from Anna B.S. Philips and husband. The third tract of 13 acres had also previously been owned by the Joiner sisters and Mary A. Stewart.

The three principals in the foregoing transactions, Graves, Lamb and Waugh, were at the time all residents of the District of Columbia. Nothing more is heard of Lamb, but Waugh and Graves continued to play an active role in the development of the area.

Edward Graves, immediately following his acquisition of the property, engaged the firm of Newby and Howell, Engineers and Surveyors of Washington, D.C., to survey the area and plat streets and lots for an urban residential community. Graves named the area Charlton Heights. All street right-of-ways were made 50 feet wide with the exception of the main entrance to the community, now Berwyn Road from the B & O Railroad to Pontiac Street, which was 70 feet wide. Lots were uniformly made 50 feet wide except corner lots on angle streets. Yet when lots were later sold, the early deeds specified that no structure was to be built nearer than 40 feet of the property line, which meant that at least three lots were

required to build a home. This restrictive covenant was apparently never enforced and was soon dropped from property deeds. The original survey of the subdivision was highly inaccurate creating many conflicts in the establishment of property lines throughout the town in subsequent transactions.

Then on September 19, 1888 Edward Graves and his wife Avis E., who was not mentioned in the previous transactions, sold the entire Charlton Heights subdivision for \$200,000 to the newly established Charlton Heights Improvement Company. This company was chartered under the laws of Virginia and located in Alexandria; Benjamin Charlton was president and James E. Waugh was secretary. Thus within a year Mr. Graves had increased his initial \$48,000 investment to \$200,000.

Over the next 3½ years, the Charlton Heights Improvement Company proceeded to sell lots in the subdivision with apparent limited success; only about 100 lots were sold by early 1892. Mr. Waugh and Mr. Graves each bought groups of lots upon which they built large homes. Mr. Waugh's home was built off of Edmonston Road in 1888 and later became known as the Senator Schall home. Mr. Graves home, also built in 1888, was located at the present site of Berwyn Heights Elementary School and subsequently became the Mother House of St. Ann's Orphanage.

By April of 1892, the Charlton Heights Improvement Company was in deep financial trouble. Mr. Waugh and Mr. Graves individually purchased all remaining unsold lots for \$50,000 and \$40,000 respectively and the Company ceased operations.

Many of the lots originally sold by the Charlton Heights Improvement Company were subsequently auctioned off to satisfy unpaid tax liens. As late as 1934, two lots in Block 7 were sold for unpaid taxes of \$8.76.

The five year series of transactions from 1887 to 1892 is interesting. Lamb and Waugh bought up the property and sold to Graves who subdivided and named the area Charlton Heights. He then sold to the Charlton Heights Improvement Company of which Charlton was president and Waugh secretary. It was then resold to Waugh and Graves as individuals. The entire sequence of transactions with the exception of the final resale to Waugh and Graves was obviously a preplanned and coordinated enterprise. Waugh then proceeded to build and sell a series of houses while Graves sold off unimproved lots. Many of the fine houses built between 1887 and 1915 are still in use today and represent excellent examples of architecture during that period. Our heritage and sense of community pride demand that they be preserved.

BERWYN HEIGHTS—1896

The Town of Berwyn Heights officially came into being on April 2, 1896 by act of the Maryland General Assembly passed on that date. The charter specified the corporate limits of the Town to "include all and the same land contained in Edward Graves' subdivision of the tract of land heretofore known as Charlton Heights, as shown by the plat of said subdivision recorded among the land records of said Prince George's County (Liber J.W.B. No. 10, Folio 309)." A search of land records at Upper Marlboro reveals that the plat is missing, however, microfilm of the original plat is on file at the Park & Planning Commission office.

By virtue of the official Charter, Berwyn Heights became the seventh incorporated municipality in Prince George's County having been preceded only by Marlboro, Bladensburg, Piscataway, Hyattsville, Laurel and Bowie. Piscataway has long since ceased to function as a municipality.

The Charter of 24 sections called for the election of three commissioners to serve for one year without pay to administer the affairs of the Town. They were authorized to appoint a Town Clerk to keep appropriate records and a Bailiff to preserve peace and order in the Town. The Commissioners were authorized to levy taxes on all real and personal property but not to exceed ten cents on each hundred dollars of assessed valuation. They were restrained from expending or contracting to expend more in any one year than they received from taxes and other sources for that year.

The charter specified that an election of commissioners was to be held on the first Monday in May in the year 1896. Dr. Adelbert H. Lee, Archie Thompson and Elijah G. Gate were named as judges of the election. Yet for reasons unknown, there is no record that an election of commissioners was ever held or that any other provisions of the charter were ever carried out. Thus the official establishment of the Town did not become a functioning reality until 28 years later.

The reason for the selection of the name of Berwyn Heights is not known. In the same year of 1896, the adjacent community west of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was also renamed from Central Heights to Berwyn.

The first known use in this area of the name Berwyn was that of a Presbyterian Church constructed in 1890 in Central Heights which was renamed Berwyn Mission in 1892. (See CHURCHES.) No record of a family name of Berwyn in the area at that time has been found. Berwyn, however, is the name of a midwest Indian tribe which may account for the subsequent use of Indian street names in the area. In the 19th century it was customary to append the term "Heights" to a community name to distinguish the more socially prestigious sector of that community. Berwyn Heights never attained that distinction.

There are no records of any type, other than land transactions, relating to the activities in the area between 1896 and 1915. A reasonable estimate of the number of homes in Berwyn Heights at the turn of the century would be between 25 and 30. A 1903 Maryland Geological Survey map of the area, in rather poor condition, shows about 32 structures.

BERWYN HEIGHTS ASSOCIATION

On January 28, 1915, a number of residents and property owners of Berwyn Heights met at the residence of F. H. Benson for the purpose of forming a citizens' association to be known as "The Berwyn Heights Association". The stated objective of the organization was "primarily for the betterment of walks and streets in Berwyn Heights and incidentally the general improvement of conditions in which the local community is interested."

Membership records of 1915 provide a fairly complete list of the residents of the town at that time. They included Mr. & Mrs. F. H. Benson, Mr. & Mrs. S. H. Bell, Mr. & Mrs. Edw. Donaldson, Mr. & Mrs. Chandler, Mr. & Mrs. W. H. Smyser, Mr. Roberts, R. Weber, Mr. Chase, Mr. & Mrs. J. C. Brelsford, Mr. & Mrs. Krause, J. J. Kliener, Mr. and Mrs. H. Benson, Mr. & Mrs. L. E. Eddy, E. J. Taylor, Mr. & Mrs. Mercer, Mr. & Mrs. Jonas Kaufman, C. H. Stein, Mr. & Mrs. J. U. Gardiner, Mr. & Mrs. John O. Hall, Miss Nellie Smith, W. A. Eisenberger, Mr. & Mrs. J. F. Keefauver, Dr. A. O. Etienne, W. A. Griffith, Mr. & Mrs. Chas. Reed, Miss M. H. Aydelotte, W. H. Dawkins, S. S. Yoder, W. W. Poultney, B. C. Getsinger, C. W. Bell, J. C. Loveless, Mr. & Mrs. John McMitt, John F. Pevare, Mr. & Mrs. Edgerton, Miss Adena Williams, W. H. Willard, Frank Sanford, Mrs. L. F. Dawkins, Richard Braden, Mrs. J. Price, Mr. & Mrs. Albert Judge, Prof. & Mrs. Beale, A. J. Wigman, G. P. Bickford, Harry McNamee, Mr. & Mrs. Z. W. Scott, Fred Frost, W. P. Fink, Frank Miller, Harry Morse, J. J. Fink, Major & Mrs. Stevens, Mr. & Mrs. John O. Waters, Mr. & Mrs. Thos. M. Nichols, T. J. Lewis, Mr. & Mrs. John Miller, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas and Geo. L. Manning.

At the first meeting of the association, Fred H. Benson was elected President, John U. Gardiner was elected Secretary and Elwood J. Taylor was elected Treasurer.

A select committee to draft by-laws was appointed and membership of standing committees of "Ways and Means," "Membership" and "Walks and Streets" were decided upon. The first resolution of the association authorized the treasurer to expend not more than \$5.00 to install a light at the terminus of the car track at Waugh Avenue. Since there were no electric lines in the area at that time, it is assumed that a kerosene or oil lamp was installed. A petition to the county commissioners was also prepared asking that Waugh and Keleher Avenues be designated as county roads.

In 1926, the association decided to purchase from Sears Roebuck a road scraper for \$33.25 and a road drag for \$14.75. They also initiated a carnival to be held at the school to raise funds for civic projects. This carnival became an annual event and was the primary source of fund raising for the community for many years.

Negotiations with the Potomac Electric Power Co. and the Public Service Commission were started in 1917 to have electrical service provided to Berwyn Heights. These negotiations continued for four years; Senator Schall and Congressman Munn, both town residents, were enlisted to exert political pressure, but PEPCO insisted on a minimum of 50 contracted subscribers before providing service. It was not until January 1921 that the 50 subscribers signed up and PEPCO agreed to provide electrical service to the town. The treasurer's report at the end of 1917 showed assets of the association as: Cash \$513., Building lot \$100., Road Machines \$25., and Lumber \$200.

The Berwyn Heights Association authorized the purchase of sugar maple and other trees to be planted along the streets of the town in 1918. Many elm trees were planted along streets at that time, most of which have recently fallen victims of the Dutch Elm Disease. In that year work was also begun on a concrete bridge over Indian Creek at Waugh

Avenue, to replace the iron bridge. The concrete bridge referred to is not the present bridge which was constructed in 1932.

In 1919 the association purchased lots 20 through 23 in block 9 for \$800 as the site for a community house. This is the property where the present Town Office and Community Center are located. Altho specifications were drawn up for a 60 x 30 foot community house and \$10,000 was budgeted for construction, the building was never constructed. That year the association purchased 63 Pyrene fire extinguishers which were placed in the homes of members; joined with the Berwyn Citizens Association in sponsoring a "Welcome Home" celebration for returned servicemen of World War I; and authorized \$500 toward the \$3,500 required to construct a state road of concrete from the B & O Railroad to Edmonston Road.

The treasurer's report for 1921 reflects the growth of the association: cash \$486, Community House site \$800, Carnival site \$1600, Dance Pavillion \$3000, Merry-go-round \$1000, piano \$250, road machinery \$53, Tidewater Stock \$500, miscellaneous equipment \$180.

The first street lights were installed in the town in 1922 when the association authorized the expenditure of \$75 for that purpose. The association also agreed to rent the pavillion to Mr. Waters on three nights a week at \$25 per night, for the purpose of staging boxing events. The pavillion which was recorded as having been located on lots 21 to 27 of Block 15, was subsequently sold by the town to Jerry and Tucker Heflin on June 3, 1925 for \$3,000. There is no further record of it, but it is believed to have burned soon thereafter. A plat of the time reveals that Block 15 had no lots numbered 21 to 27, but Block 14 does, and appears to be the correct location of the pavillion.

In February of 1924, a committee of Messrs. Stein, Corkhill, Gardiner, Brelsford and Donaldson was appointed to draft a charter of incorporation and present it to the State Legislature. The charter was duly drafted and presented. On March 21, 1924 the Maryland House of Delegates repealed the 1896 charter and passed the new charter. Thus an official town government began to function. It must be remembered that for nine years the Berwyn Heights Association, having no taxing authority or other legal status, effectively managed the affairs of the community and made great strides in the development of the community. Immediately after the incorporation of Berwyn Heights, the Berwyn Heights Association turned over to the commissioners all assets of the association and disbanded on May 23, 1924.

The Berwyn Heights Association started a tradition, that of local groups of concerned citizens taking an active role in community affairs, that has served the town well over the years. Another organization which predates the establishment of a functioning town government in 1924 was the Berwyn Heights Home and School Association, the records of which appear to have been lost. Subsequent local organizations which have helped to bring about many improvements in the community are the Berwyn Heights Citizens Association, the Parent Teachers Association, the Boys and Girls Clubs and the Recreation Council.

BERWYN HEIGHTS II

Maryland House of Delegates bill No. 619 dated March 21, 1924, repealed the 1896 charter of the Town of Berwyn Heights and enacted a new charter for the town. The new charter called for the election of five commissioners to be elected for a term of two years, to serve without compensation. Women were eligible to vote and also to hold office under the new charter; rights denied by the 1896 charter. However, it was not until 1960 that the first woman, Mrs. Alice O'Dea, was elected to the office of Commissioner.

In addition to a Clerk and Bailiff called for in the 1896 charter, the new charter also called for the appointment of a Health Officer. This was apparently in response to a then recent polio epidemic in the area due to the inadequate sanitary facilities. The Commissioners were further directed to appoint three town residents to act as a Board of Assessors for the town, who were to assess all property upon which the Commissioners were authorized to levy a tax, this time not to exceed twenty cents per hundred dollars of assessed valuation. The charter specified that a referendum for ratification thereof be held May 6, 1924 with W. H. Willard, J. C. Loveless and J. Brelsford acting as judges of election and Fred Frost as clerk. This time, the referendum was held and the residents of the town overwhelmingly approved the charter.

Immediately thereafter, on May 15, 1924, the first election was held and Edward Donaldson, Charles Stein, Ernest Corkhill, Fred Frost and Harry Anderson were elected commissioners. At their first meeting held at the home of Mr. Donaldson on May 24, 1924, Mr. Donaldson was chosen as Chairman of the Board. Dr. M. L. Turner was appointed Health Officer; Leo Loveless was appointed Bailiff; W. H. Willard, J. C. Loveless and Fred Worden were appointed Assessors. John W. Hall was appointed Treasurer and Clerk, Fred

Worden Supervisor of Roads and Walks, and James Taylor Electric Light Engineer.

Ordinance No. 1 granted a license to J. O. Waters to operate a boxing arena on his property, then known as "Sportland Heights," at a fee of \$50 per performance. This arena was later declared a public nuisance, and on March 29, 1926 the license was rescinded and further exhibitions were prohibited.

The 1924 assessment reveals that there were 306 taxpayers owning property in the town, having an assessed valuation of \$187,913. At the time there were only about 65 houses in the town and a couple of small business establishments along the railroad near Berwyn Road. Best remembered are the McNamee Bros. Grocery Store and the Keefauver General Merchandise Store.

Growth of the town was slow but steady over the next 20 years. It was not until water and sewer services were generally available, immediately after World War II, that home construction was greatly accelerated. The 1955 census reflects 316 homes and that number had approached 1,000—with an assessed valuation in excess of 21 million—by 1975. Virtually all available area is now developed and the population of the town is now relatively stable. Population statistics at 20 year intervals, show 228 residents in 1930, 674 in 1950 and 3,934 in 1970.

Of the 434 acres in the town, 298 acres are zoned single unit residential, 25 acres are classified as commercial, 5 acres are industrial, 15 acres are public, 5 are park and recreation, and 86 are undeveloped. The commercial land is concentrated along Greenbelt Road, while the industrial fronts are on the B & O Railroad. The public lands include a church, schools and town services.

Ninety-three percent of the residential units in the town are owner occupied, one of the highest percentages in the

metropolitan area. This accounts in part for the high standard of home maintenance and citizen participation in Berwyn Heights community affairs.

In 1945 the Town of College Park decided to incorporate as a city and to include the surrounding communities. The proposition to join the City of College Park was heatedly debated, and finally put to a vote by the residents of Berwyn Heights. The proposition was defeated by the voters and Berwyn Heights continued as a separate and independent town.

The Town of Berwyn Heights has been capably and effectively administered for over half a century by a Board of Commissioners. Only within the current administration has a slight modification in the form of government been made wherein the Chairman of the Board has been designated Mayor and the members of the board are now Councilmen. Jadie McDougald is the first official mayor of the town.

The present town office building was constructed in 1956 as an office and garage to house the police car. In 1965, when the town maintenance building was constructed on 54th Avenue, the garage portion of the building was converted into the town office and the former office was converted into the town library.

When the new fire department building on 60th Avenue and Seminole Street was completed, the old fire house on 57th Avenue was purchased by the town as a community center. The large second story meeting room with kitchen, is the site of many community affairs as well as the monthly public meetings of the town council. The ground floor serves primarily as a center for teen activities.

The Board of Commissioners decided in the fall of 1967 that the town should adopt an official town seal. A contest, open to all town residents, was held to design such a seal.

The only specific requirements were that the seal include sufficient symbolism of the town's history in the design. Of the ten designs submitted, that of James L. Houser, a former town commissioner, was adjudged the winner and the seal was adopted by resolution on December 19, 1967.

The main theme of the seal is a white oak leaf with three acorns beneath. The oak leaf has a dual significance as it is the Maryland State Tree and it represents what is believed to be the largest oak tree in Prince George's County. This tree stands near the intersection of Quebec Street and 58th Avenue. It is a Southern Red Oak, measuring 18 feet in circumference at shoulder level.

The colors of blood red, gold and black were taken from the Maryland State Seal, while the deep purple of the background was taken from the Prince George's County seal. The ribbon bears the dates 1896, 1924 and 1967, representing the original incorporation of the town, the revised charter and beginning of a functioning town government, and the adoption of the town seal.

Town seals, together with "Welcome to Berwyn Heights" placards were mounted at all main entrances to the town in 1975.

STREET NAMES

In 1941 the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission renamed and renumbered the streets of Berwyn Heights in conformity with the greater Washington Metropolitan area system. The original and present names are:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Blundon Ave. | now 54th Ave. |
| Brewer Ave. | 55th Ave. |
| Franklin Ave. (n. of Thomas) | 56th Ave. |
| Munn Ave. (s. of Thomas) | 56th Ave. |
| Howell Ave. (n. of Duncanson) | 57th Ave. |
| Joyner Ave. (s. of Waugh) | 57th Ave. |
| Huntley Ave. | 58th Ave. |
| Compton Ave. | 59th Ave. |
| Miller Ave. | 60th Ave. |
| Alma Ave. | 60th Place |
| Gibson Ave. | 62nd Ave. |
| Ridge Ave. (s. of LaBelle) | 63rd Ave. |
| Parker Ave. (Newby to LaBelle) | 63rd Ave. |
| French Ave. (n. of Newby) | 63rd Ave. |
| Munn Ave. (east of Huntley) | Nevada St. |
| Thomas Ave. (west of Huntley) | Osage St. |
| Carrington Ave. (east of Cunningham) | Osage St. |
| LaBelle Ave. | Pontiac Street |
| Avis Ave. (east of Miller) | Quebec St. |
| Johnson Ave. (west of Miller) | Quebec St. |
| Keleher Ave. | Ruatan St. |
| Duncanson Ave. | Seminole St. |
| Newby St. (west of Miller) | Tecumseh St. |
| Haxton St. (east of Miller) | Tecumseh St. |
| French Ave. (south of Newby) | Tecumseh Place |
| Waugh Ave. (Blundon to Miller) | Berwyn Road |
| Washington Ave. (Miller to Edmonston) | Berwyn Road. |

There is not a precise correlation between original and present designations because as streets were opened the placement and naming did not always conform to the original plat of the community. Although the present system has order, numerical progression from west to east and alphabetic progression from south to north, one wonders what the early settlers of the area would have thought of it. Cunningham Avenue is the only name that has been retained from the original plat of Charlton Heights. There was no Charlton Avenue designated in the original Charlton Heights plat but the most recently developed section of Berwyn Heights does have a street so named. 55th Avenue, if laid out according to the original plat, would be a better canal. Newby and Howell Streets were named after the surveyors, the others were named for prominent residents of the community.

STREETCARS AND RAILROADS

The first streetcar service linking the Berwyn Heights area with Washington was initiated in September 1900 when the City and Suburban Railway extended the tracks from Riverdale along Rhode Island Avenue to Berwyn. Financial difficulties of the City and Suburban led to the formation of the Berwyn and Laurel Electric Railroad in 1901 which completed the line from Berwyn through Branchville, Beltsville and Contee to Laurel. The first trip from Laurel to 15th and H Streets N.E. was made in September of 1902. At the same time the name was again changed to the Washington, Berwyn and Laurel Railroad Company. In 1910 the company went bankrupt and was sold to the City and Suburban Railway which continued the service until it became a part of the Capital Transit Company. In the early 1940's service from Beltsville to Laurel was terminated, in July 1949 the Branchville to Beltsville section was abandoned, and in the early 1960's the entire line was abandoned when buses took over.

The Washington Spa Spring and Greta Railroad Company, known as the Greta Line, was incorporated in Maryland in February 1905 and was given a charter by the Maryland General Assembly on April 6, 1908 to construct and operate a streetcar line from 15th and H Streets N.E. through Bladensburg to Branchville Road in Berwyn Heights. In August 1910 the line was put into operation to Bladensburg. In 1911 the company floated two \$50,000 bond issues, the first to lay the track from Bladensburg to Berwyn Heights and the other to purchase four storage battery cars and other equipment required to operate the line. In 1912 the line was extended to what is now the intersection of 58th Avenue and Berwyn Road in Berwyn Heights. This section of line was not electrified and used battery operated cars. As a result it was necessary for Berwyn Heights commuters to transfer to trolley cars

at Bladensburg and again at 15th and H Streets N.W. The name of the company was changed in October 1912 to the Washington Interurban Railway Company.

Service on the line was primitive at best and commuters were frequently required to debark and walk up inclines when the batteries were low. In 1913 the entire line was electrified but service continued to be poor and the line never made a profit. In June 1921 the segment from Berwyn Heights to East Riverdale was abandoned and in May 1923 the entire line terminated operations.

Competing with the two streetcar lines to the area was the Baltimore and Ohio Railway which provided fast and frequent commuter service between Berwyn Road and Union Station and also to Baltimore. Yet they refused to build a station at the Berwyn Road stop so the citizens of Berwyn Heights and Berwyn jointly raised a sum, reportedly \$7,000 to build a station. The agreement stipulated that the sum would be repaid by the Baltimore and Ohio if the service made a profit. There is no record of the \$7,000 having been repaid but the station eventually became the property of the Railroad. The station was originally named the Charlton Heights Station but in 1896 was renamed the Berwyn Station. The station had an impressive copper dome which was placed on display in the Baltimore and Ohio Railway Museum in Baltimore when the station was demolished about 1960. Although still a stop for rush hour commuter trains, only an open platform is provided. The site of the station is presently the location of the Kidwell building.

The Berwyn Road crossing of the Baltimore and Ohio Railway tracks was barricaded and permanently closed to vehicular traffic shortly after a train-auto collision in September 1942 killed two residents of Berwyn Heights. The construction of the Greenbelt Road overpass also negated the need to keep the dangerous grade crossing at Berwyn Road open.

CHURCHES

About 1870 Marianna Keech and her sisters established a girls' seminary in their home near Brown's Mill, later known as Mowatt's Mill on Edmonston Road. In this little known school, the first known Sunday School and church services in the area were conducted. The religious congregation soon outgrew the home, so together with the Reverend Samuel W. Haddaway, they decided to organize and build a church. The Jonathan T. Walker family donated an acre of land on Greenbelt Road between what are now 60th Street and Cunningham Drive to the congregation for this purpose.

In 1874 the church was built. It was constructed of pine lumber with a brick foundation and consisted of a 30 by 40 foot auditorium, vestibule, and a room on the west side for Sunday School. It was named Haddaway Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church in honor of the principal founder and first pastor—Reverend Samuel Haddaway. The first marriage in the chapel joined William DuVall and Virgie Hughes in 1902.

The trustees of the church decided in 1894 to turn a part of the church lot into a small cemetery and over the next 13 years some fifty persons were interred there.

In October 1907, while the church janitor was burning grass and leaves on the church lot, the church caught fire and burned to the ground. Temporary quarters for the congregation were found in a hall owned by Mrs. Cora Scaggs until a new church was built in 1910 at Branchville Road and 51st Street in Branchville. The church property in Berwyn Heights was subsequently sold with the exception of the cemetery which remains the property of the United Methodist Church of College Park. Only a few toppled gravestones remain in the badly neglected cemetery. Among the gravestones remaining are one of Columbus C. Bacon who died in 1895 at age 67, and Coralily Duvall interred in 1901.

Interestingly, the only church presently located in Berwyn Heights, the Berwyn United Presbyterian Church located at 63rd Street and Greenbelt Road, also had its beginning at Haddaway Chapel. Mr. and Mrs. Henry P. Viles together with Frank Middleton founded a religious organization which they named the Golden Chain about 1882 which met at the Haddaway Chapel. Doctrinal differences led to the departure of the organization from Haddaway Chapel in 1885. They constructed a little 24 by 36 foot mission house in the same year near the Branchville Station of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad which was named the Branchville Mission. In 1886 the mission became affiliated with the Fourth Presbyterian Church.

In 1890 a new church was constructed at Potomac and Quebec Streets in what is now Berwyn. The church was named the Charlton Heights Mission but in 1892 was renamed the Berwyn Mission, reportedly in honor of a patron who made a substantial donation to the church in honor of his son, Berwyn, a lifetime invalid. The family name of this patron has not been established thereby precluding confirmation of this first known use of the name *Berwyn* in this area.

In May 1914 the church was again renamed to Berwyn Presbyterian Church. The site on Greenbelt Road was purchased in 1953 and in April 1958 construction of the new church was begun. The building was dedicated on 16 November 1958. The new sanctuary was completed in 1965. The Reverend Sidney R. Congor has served as pastor since 1961.

MINES AND MILLS

Several vague references to a "Brown's Mill" have been found which indicate that it was a sawmill located on Edmonston Road perhaps as early as 1865. The precise location and time of operation of this mill have not been determined. The 1861 Martenett map of the area shows a "Walker and Cross Mill" located on the west side of Edmonston Road near the southern boundary of the town. This is believed to have been a grist mill established prior to 1760 which was operated by Benjamin Beall and family for many years.

Other references, equally unspecific, refer to a "Mowatt's Mill," reportedly both a sawmill and a grist mill operating in the local area in the 1880's. It was operated by a John Mowatt who came here from Scotland about 1880. Again, specific details have not been found.

The 1878 Hopkins maps of the area show an unnamed grist mill located on Indian Creek a short distance south of the present town boundary. Although these maps were registered with the Library of Congress in 1878, and thus bear that date, it is obvious from some of the details shown on the maps which can be reliably dated, that the mapping was done considerably before that date.

The same Hopkins map shows a "Poudrette Factory" located on the west bank of Indian Creek at about Seminole Street. There was a railroad spur line running from the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to the factory. An exhaustive search of land and corporate records has failed to reveal any other record of such a factory. The name suggests that it may have been a fertilizer factory. But iron ore, gravel, and possibly clay were mined in the area during and shortly after the Civil War. One mined area extended from Indian Creek as far east as 58th Avenue and a large mining excavation was visible between 57th and 58th Avenues just south of Greenbelt Road, as late as the 1950's. The Sportland Heights boxing arena was also located in a mining excavation, probably a gravel pit.

SCHOOLS

In 1889, the first public elementary school in the area was built in a pine grove located on the east side of Edmonston Road near the junction of Berwyn Road. It was a one-room log school built out of pine logs cut on the site, and was appropriately named Pine Grove Academy. The first teacher, Benjamin Pritchard, taught all subjects to all of the seven grades. It was heated in winter by a large potbellied wood-burning stove which the male students had the responsibility for tending. They were also responsible for carrying water for the school in buckets from a nearby spring. Tasks for the girl students included sweeping the floors, filling ink-wells and cleaning erasers. Sanitary facilities consisted of two small annexes located at an appropriate distance to the rear of the school.

Shortly thereafter, in 1894, a similar school was erected at the intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and Branchville Road. This one was called Oak Grove Academy and was attended by many of the early residents of Berwyn Heights.

Around 1919, parents of the students at Pine Grove Academy began to petition for a new school. Their efforts were successful and in 1922 the new Berwyn Heights Elementary School on Ruatan Street was opened, and Pine Grove Academy was closed. The old school stood vacant until the early 1930's when it burned. The new frame school had two rooms divided by folding doors and an unfinished basement. Mary Culbertson was the first principal and Katheryn Stein was the first teacher. Although the new school had electricity, it was not until 1925 that indoor plumbing was installed.

After World War II, the rapid expansion of the town outgrew the capacity of Berwyn Heights Elementary School and the number of grades were gradually reduced until only grades one and two could be accommodated at the facility.

In 1956 the property of the old St. Ann's Infant Asylum was acquired and construction of the new school was begun. The school was completed and opened for the fall semester of 1958, once again providing adequate facilities for all elementary students of the town. The gymnasium, financed by the Park & Planning Commission, was completed in 1974. Miss Miriam Farwell served capably as principal of the new school from the time it opened until her retirement in 1973. The old school on Ruatan Street was retained as a day care facility.

In 1897 the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph purchased two tracts of land in Berwyn Heights; one of 12 lots in Block 35 from Edward Graves and wife Katherine for \$11,000, the other of six lots in Block 35, from Jacob Tome and wife Evalyn for \$600. On this site, which was long known as St. Ann's Hill, they opened St. Ann's Infant Asylum as a summer home for the pre-school orphans of St. Ann's Orphanage in the District of Columbia. The original Graves home was used as a Mother House for the Sisters, and a series of cottages were constructed—each to house about 20 orphans. At least one home in Berwyn Heights, at 5804 Ruatan Street, is known to have been used by the Sisters of Charity as a home for unwed mothers and mothers-to-be until their infants could be placed in the orphanage. This infant asylum was operated until World War II after which time the property was sold to the Prince George's Dept. of Education. Today, the only reminder of the orphanage is a crudely engraved cornerstone bearing the simple legend—St. Anns—which was salvaged when the buildings were demolished, and it is presently a stepping stone in the walk of a house on Pontiac Street.

The Brookland Child Study Center at 8306 58th Avenue was founded in 1948 by Dorothy Ann Doyle, as a special education center for mentally and physically handicapped children. This school had been a pioneer in the field of special

education and has over the years enjoyed a high degree of success in returning seriously handicapped children to society and the public school system.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Berwyn Heights Association initiated fire protection service in 1919 when they purchased 63 Pyrene fire extinguishers and appointed a committee to install them in the homes of residents of the community with instructions for their proper utilization. Later in the same year residents of Berwyn Heights and Berwyn joined to form the Berwyn Volunteer Fire Company. Equipment consisted of soda-acid tank and a tank hose which were housed in an old shed where the Beautiful Day Trading Post is now located.

In June of 1925, the Commissioners of Berwyn Heights met to discuss the feasibility of organizing a local Fire Department. Mr. Yost was appointed chairman of a committee to study the situation. Apparently the study was favorable because by March of 1926 the town had acquired a fire engine and the decision was made to erect a fire house. The Commissioners and the Citizens Association each donated \$250 for the construction of a 20 by 28 foot concrete block building to house the fire engine and the road grader. The building which was constructed on the present site of the Community Center was completed in September 1926. The original fire engine was a converted Pierce Arrow touring car.

Although the new Berwyn Heights Volunteer Company was unincorporated it soon became an active participant in community affairs. Mr. Buffington was appointed as the first chief of the fire company. In 1928 a used Chevrolet soda-acid tank truck was purchased and in 1930 a used Republic tank truck and pumper was added. After operating without legal status for five years, the company was officially incorporated in May of 1930. John Yost was appointed Chief, Walter Anderson Assistant Chief, Samuel Moyer became President and James Taylor Captain. The members of the volunteer squad were Ed Weaver, Robert Ailes, Mort Johnston, Harry Anderson, Henry Myers and John Kleiner.

The first new fully equipped pumper was added to the fleet in 1938 with the purchase of a Diamond T. Old 141 as it became known was at the time one of the finest pieces of fire fighting equipment in the area. At the start of World War II a rescue squad vehicle was acquired and special training in rescue operations became an important phase of training for fire fighters.

The new fire house, which is presently the Community Center, was constructed in 1953/1954 immediately adjacent to the original fire house. Also in 1953 the first Class A pumper, a GMC, was purchased, followed in 1955 by the addition of an International heavy duty rescue squad vehicle. This latter vehicle was financed 75% by the Prince George's and Maryland Civil Defense organizations.

In 1967 a bond issue was financed by Prince George's County for the construction of a new fire house. Five lots at 60th and Seminole Streets were purchased as the site, and construction was completed in May 1968. Out of this modern facility operates one of the finest volunteer fire fighting and rescue squad organizations in the area. In addition to the 52 dedicated volunteers who man the facility around the clock, there are three Prince George's career firefighters and one officer assigned to duty during the day shift. Over the years three volunteer fire fighters lost their lives in the line of duty; the first by electrical shock, Clinton D. Walker, Sr. of a heart attack and John Leyh in a vehicle crash while responding to an alarm.

With the purchase in 1975 of a \$47,500 custom ambulance and rescue vehicle, the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Company now provides complete emergency service of the highest standard to residents of Berwyn Heights and surrounding areas.

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Company was organized in February 1929. During the early

days of the fire company when funding was a major problem, the Ladies Auxiliary raised a substantial portion of the operating funds of the company through community dinners, bake sales and direct solicitation.

The files of the Fire Company contain a copy of the following handwritten letter to William Mercer, Secretary dated 12 September 1942:

Mr. Wm. N. Mercer
Berwyn Heights Vol. Fire Dept. Inc.
Berwyn, Md.

My Dear Mr. Mercer:

Just before leaving on an extended tour I want to snatch a moment to write and tell you that after graduating from college I was an enthusiastic member of the Volunteer Fire Dept. of Hyde Park where I grew up, but, of course, as you may well imagine I do not have much time to go to fires nowadays although the clang of a firebell always makes me want to drop everything and run to the scene!

Yours Very Sincerely,
Franklin D. Roosevelt

No story of the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Company would be complete without paying tribute to George C. (Pop) Hudgins who over a period of almost 40 years helped to mold it into the fine organization that it is today.

OLD HOMES

It was the intent of this writer to trace the history of all of the old homes in the community to the original owners, and to document interesting features as well as significant historical details thereof. But the time and effort required for such an ambitious undertaking precluded the execution of the intent. The land records at Upper Marlboro are not organized to facilitate such research, and few of the original owners who could provide the historical details are available.

Yet it is strongly felt that such an undertaking is vital to a comprehensive history of the town and could be instrumental in the preservation of these houses which add so much to the character of the community. It is hoped that someone will undertake such a project before more historical data is lost forever.

By far the oldest existing house in Berwyn Heights is the large frame colonial house at 5933 Natasha Drive. The original section of the house dates back to 1790 with a major addition having been built about 1830. Standing on its original fieldstone foundation, the three-story, twelve room house suffered a serious fire in January 1958, but fortunately damage was confined to the interior, and the residents at the time—the H. Dale Smith family—expertly restored the house. The exterior of the house is distinguished by a pair of external chimneys and a two story columned porch. The house is solidly constructed with 8 x 14 inch oak beams held together with wooden pegs both under the first floor and the roof.

Several prominent people resided in the home during its long and colorful history. One of the residents, General Edward C. Carrington, owned not only the home but 150 acres of surrounding land. This farm and orchard, originally known as Red Barn, was later known as Sportland.

Another distinguished resident of the home from about 1865 to 1881 was Thomas Ewing who served in the Union Army during the Civil War as a Brigadier General. He practiced law in Washington to 1871, and was elected a U.S. Representative from Ohio where he served from 1877 to 1881. A highlight of Ewing's career was his defense of Mrs. Surratt in the trial for harboring John Wilkes Booth following the assassination of President Lincoln.

Judge Andrew Burch, father of T. Raymond Burch, was also a resident of the home for a brief period.

The home reportedly served as an army field hospital during the War of 1812, but no records have been found to substantiate such use.

While renovating the home, the H. Dale Smith family made an interesting discovery. Beneath several layers of linoleum in the kitchen, a trap door was found. It led to an excavation beneath the house and porch which contained all the trappings of a distilling operation, including bushels of green glass whiskey bottles, and jugs and crocks. The vent from the still led to what had formerly been a shed on the property.

For many years the residence of three generations of the John J. Kleiner family, the 15 room mansion at 5603 Ruatan Street, has been an impressive landmark. Many of the original leaded glass windows are still intact; four of the five fireplaces on the first floor have a common flue running up the center of the house. The ceramic tile fireplace facings were reportedly imported directly from Italy for the house. The windmill on the property was only recently dismantled.

The large 19th century home at 5713 Ruatan Street is a lasting tribute to the craftsmen who designed and built this splendid house. Adjoining is what appears to be the original

carriage house with servant's quarters above—perhaps the only remaining carriage house in the town. This house reportedly had the first gas lights in the area.

The original owners of four houses clustered in the 5800 block of Ruatan Street, all built between 1870 and 1890, have been established as follows; 5804-Keefauver, 5805-Kline, 5808-Blundon, and 5815-Loveless. All were active in community affairs during the formative years of the town.

The stately house at 8911 57th Avenue was built in 1889/1890. Among the early residents were the Moyer and Booty families. The house still has a cistern in the attic which was used as a tank for an early gravity flow water supply. Two of the finest pin oak trees in the community are on the property.

Although not one of the oldest houses in town, the house at 8516 58th Avenue is one of the best maintained and fully documented. It was constructed in 1909 for Elwood J. Taylor by builder William G. Fisher of Berwyn who built a number of other homes in the area. The contract price of construction of \$2300 included slate roof, flooring of North Carolina pine and a gravity water system supplied by a tank in the attic. Mr. Taylor served four terms as a Commissioner of Berwyn Heights, was a Justice of Peace, raised prize-winning Wyandotte chickens, and had a large orchard on his property.

One of the early Waugh-built homes is still in use at 5617 Seminole Street. It was constructed in 1889 for Conrad Bonnet, the father of Mrs. Gahan who has been a lifelong resident of Berwyn Heights and Berwyn.

There are about 30 homes in the community which are more than 70 years old, each having an individuality lacking in many of the more recent dwellings. Spacious porches reflect earlier life styles, steeply pitched roofs usually accommodate rooms on a third floor. Upper level balconies, circular cupolas, fish scale shingle siding and decorative woodwork are characteristic of these fine old homes. They represent a legacy which should be preserved by the community.

SOME REMEMBRANCES

Many of the elderly residents and former residents of the town were interviewed in the process of compiling this little history. Some of their recollections provide interesting sidelights of the early years of the community.

One 93 year old former resident recalls that, as a school-girl attending the Pine Grove Academy, she used to walk to school through the Carrington orchards where in the fall she gathered fallen apples. General Carrington is remembered as frequently riding around the area on a spirited horse, giving children rides and handing out home-made candy. He is recalled as having a long white beard.

One of the fine old houses in the town according to legend, was financed by two sisters who worked for the U.S. Treasury Department. They reportedly had access to old paper currency which had been returned to the treasury for destruction, and over a period of years managed to pilfer large sums of this money secreted in their clothing. The house so financed is located at 5603 Ruatan Street.

Several residents have fond recollections of a philosophical black well-digger known only as Giles, who for many years dug wells in the town while dispensing his philosophy of life. He reportedly had an unerring facility for locating water.

A wooden plank sidewalk extending from Indian Creek along Berwyn Road and Ruatan Street to 58th Avenue, made pedestrian traffic more pleasant for many of the early residents of the community before the streets were paved.

Trapping of muskrat along Indian Creek provided a substantial source of income for one resident prior to World

War II. Several reported catching many fine fish in the creek, while another recalls swimming in the six foot deep hole near the bridge.

Still others have heard legends of seamen from sailing ships tied up at Bladensburg combing the area for pine trees suitable for masts for sailing vessels. Other crews later cut oak trees in the town for railroad ties during the construction of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

A black family, who lived in the old Husted house on Ruatan Street around the turn of the century, were reportedly employees of the Rockefeller family and are remembered for the fine horses and carriages which they owned.

One resident recalls clearing the trees for the opening of 58th Avenue from Seminole Street to Quebec Street. "Pop" Hudgins, who is fondly remembered by many town residents, assisted in this work.

Several residents recalled memories of the Senator Schall mansion, and of the Senator himself. Thomas D. Schall was a U.S. Representative and Senator from Minnesota from 1915 to 1935. Most of that period he was a resident of Berwyn Heights, living in a colonial mansion built by James Waugh on Edmonston Road. The house, which had the first swimming pool in the area, has long since been demolished. Vestiges of the driveway, curbing and brick wall remain at 8714 Edmonston Avenue as well as several fine old trees planted by early residents. Blinded in 1907 by an electrical shock, the Senator was killed in 1935 when struck by an automobile in Washington, D.C.

References have been found to a Congressman Munn who was an early resident of the community. Unfortunately, the office of the Architect of the Capitol has no record of a Congressman Munn ever serving in Congress.

In its heyday during the 1920's the Sportland boxing arena attracted large crowds of fight fans from the District of Columbia and the surrounding area. Traffic along Berwyn Road from U.S. 1 was so heavy on fight nights that residents of Berwyn petitioned the Commissioners of Berwyn Heights to have the arena closed. Alcoholic beverages were openly sold and consumed in quantity; as a result it was not unusual to have more fights in the stands than in the ring.

WE GET LETTERS

Selected correspondence in the town files provide interesting and sometimes amusing insights into conditions in the town early in this century. A 1929 letter to the commissioners reads: "Receipt is acknowledged of your communication of Feb. 25, 1929, relative to non-payment of the 1928 tax bill of _____. Please be advised that payment of this bill is being withheld for some evidence of improvements to the road or footwalks in my immediate vicinity. Former similar taxes have been paid since the town was incorporated and not one cent of it has gone for improvements from which I have derived any benefit. The condition of the roads at the present time is such that the prerequisite for entering or leaving my residence is nothing short of a pair of rubber boots." Taxpayers revolt is nothing new.

Another citizen in the same year requested a receipt for the payment of his 30¢ town tax.

Dogs and cows were the subject of a 1928 letter from the town commissioners to the Prince George's County commissioners: "In regard to the claim being presented by _____ for the loss of one grade gurnsey cow, mangled and torn by dogs, the Board of Commissioners of Berwyn Heights, although the proof is circumstantial, are convinced that the dogs responsible for the loss of the cow are two large, strong and savage bull dogs owned and kept by _____ who lives across the street from Mr. _____. We do not believe that there are any other animals in our vicinity strong and fierce enough to do the damage and injury to a cow that we understand was done to the cow Mr. _____ lost. And it is our opinion that the said dogs are a menace and a danger to this community, that they are dangerous to human beings as well as animals, and should be destroyed."

Another cow was the subject of a complaint to the town commissioners as late as 1945: "I am sorry to make this complaint. But my neighbor is determined to have a cow and to keep the cow just 12 feet from my kitchen and bedroom windows and refuses to move her. This cow is in a lot between his house and mine. The lot is 50 feet. The cow eats and then comes and lies under the tree just 12 feet from my kitchen and when she gets up you know what happens, and we have to contend with this. Now all the neighbors have come to me and asked me what I was going to do. So I am now reporting to you. Now Mr. _____ has had his boy put a fence around this lot and run electricity through the wire which I think is dangerous, as many children as there are around here. I was told to go to the county health department which I did. They refused me any assistance, because we are incorporated and they told me that it was up to you to give me relief.

Gentlemen—I came to this town four years ago to make my home, but I cannot do so under these conditions. This depreciates the value of my property and that is not all. The family that lives upstairs claim that they cannot live under these circumstances, so I am asking you for relief." There is no record of how the commissioners resolved this problem.

Two recurring themes of correspondence between the residents and commissioners from the time the town was incorporated through the early 1940's, were the condition of the streets and problems with sewage. Many of the streets were muddy quagmires filled with potholes during much of the year, and were totally impassible by vehicle on occasion. The lack of a sewage system was an even more serious problem; the impervious soil of the area was not receptive to septic systems, so overflowing septic tanks and raw sewage piped directly into ditches constituted not only a smelly nuisance,

but a serious health hazard. It was not until 1945 that the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission solved the problem by installing sewage lines in the area in response to repeated citizen petitions, and prodding by the county health authorities.

SUMMATION

Significant dates:

| | |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| 1790 | Oldest House (5933 Natasha Drive) |
| 1874 | First Church (Haddaway Chapel) |
| 1888 | Charlton Heights Established |
| 1889 | First School (Pine Grove Academy) |
| 1896 | Original Berwyn Heights Charter |
| 1915 | Berwyn Heights Association Organized |
| 1924 | Berwyn Heights Charter Revised |
| 1925 | Volunteer Fire Department Established |
| 1941 | Streets Renamed |
| 1967 | Town Seal Adopted |

Statistics:

Area: 434 Acres

Population 1970: 3934

Homes 1975: 1000

Homes owner occupied: 93%.

NOTES