A picture history of a north Baltimore community

Govans
Village and Suburb

John Brain
Foreword and Acknowledgments

In 1987 Govans celebrated the bicentennial of York Turnpike, commemorating the 200th anniversary of the year 1787, when Baltimore County Council voted to upgrade York Road and construct a well-maintained highway. This bicentennial also offered an opportunity to look back even further to the earliest history of the area, dating from Lord Baltimore's grant of land to William Govane in 1755.

The celebration was sponsored by the Govanstowne Bicentennial Committee and was supported by the York Road Historical Committee, the Community Council of Govans, The Govanstowne Business Association, and many individual businesses. The celebration included a historic house tour conducted in a city tour trolley, a bicentennial party, a bicentennial parade, and a history exhibit and lecture series at Govans Library. Memorable in the lecture series was a get-together of many of the area's oldest inhabitants, some of whose recollections are included in this volume. At that time it was also agreed to tape record these recollections and work toward publication of a picture history of Govans.

Of great help in researching this history was a manuscript history by Bill Tamburrino, who was at that time a planning assistant with the Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation. Dorothy Earp's *Govanstowne As I Remember It* and Eleanor Matthews' reminiscences were also very helpful, which were found in the Govans history collection at Govans Library. Lee McCardell's *A History of Govans* derived from the "Your Town" articles published in *The Evening Sun* in 1940 and is a valuable document. Barbara Stevens' *Homeland: History and Heritage* remains the best pictorial history of the Perine estate. Dr. John Breihan, professor of history at Loyola College, involved his students in a number of Govans history research projects, and his student Nicole Manganaro served as a research assistant, tracking down needed photographs.

My special thanks go to Madeleine Cooper and Sam Jett, Jr. and the Community Council of Govans/York Road Council, who have supported this history project from the outset. Without their continuing encouragement it would never have been completed.

John Brain
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Govans Village & Suburb

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## Contents

4 Introduction  
8 Govans Village  

*The Era of the Great Estates*  
13 The Govanes of Govanstown  
14 The Perines of Homeland  
20 Enoch Pratt and Tivoli  
22 The Walters and St. Mary’s  

*The York Road*  
24 The Turnpike  
28 Wagon Houses  
32 Streetcar Days  
36 Merchants  
39 Taverns  
42 Parades  
44 C&P Telephone  

*Govans Churches*  
46 Church and Community  
48 Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter  
49 Pleasant Hope Baptist Church  
50 Govans Boundary United Methodist Church  
52 Church of the Nativity  
54 Church of St. Mary  
56 Govans Presbyterian Church  
58 Gregory Memorial Baptist Church/Huber  

*Govans Organizes*  
60 The Woman’s Club of Govans  
62 Four Govans Organizations  
64 The Churches of the Greater Govans Community  
67 The Community Council of Govans  
69 The York Road Planning Area Committee  
71 The Govanstowne Business Association  
74 Recent Developments: GEDCO, YRP, GEMS  
75 Friends of Govans Library  

*Govans Remembers*  
76 Martha Bokel  
78 Lillian Ballard  
79 Dorothy Earp  
80 Newton Johnson  
81 Eleanor Matthews  
84 J. Howard Norris  
85 Grace Rodgers  
86 Cooper Walker  
88 Edna Wasson  

*Govans’ Landmarks*  
89 The McCabe Mansion  
89 Cedarcroft  
90 The Gallagher Mansion  
90 The Senator Theatre  
91 Govans Fire House  
91 Dr. Merrillat’s Academy  

*Epilogue*  
92 Govans’ Future  

*Maps*  
93, 94, 95, 96
Going up . . . and coming down
The Joseph A. Banks factory off Homeland Avenue was demolished in 1987. Nearby, on Belvedere Avenue, Belvedere Square Shopping Center was being constructed.
Introduction: Govans, Village and Suburb

Govans today is a neighborhood of Baltimore City. But for much of its long history, Govans was a village some miles north of the City line in Baltimore County. For most of its history it was called Govanstown, after William Govane, who received a tract of land from Frederick Calvert, Sixth Lord Baltimore, in the mid-seventeenth centuries.

Govans has always been associated with York Road — at first an Indian trail, then an important commercial road linking the rich farmlands of Pennsylvania with the city and port of Baltimore, and finally the urban corridor we know today, travelled by over 20,000 commuters daily.

In earlier times families often stayed many generations in their ancestral homes. Today the average family moves on every few years, following advancement and job opportunities. As a result, people are less aware of the histories of their neighborhoods, less conscious of the changes that have taken place during the course of a single lifetime. In Govans, for instance, during the past century a rural village has been transformed into an urban community. Cultivated fields have been built over so that few grassy areas remain and certainly no land under cultivation. To find a state of development such as Govans was at the turn of the century, one must go another fifteen miles up York Road, beyond Cockeysville.

Yet within living memory of many older residents, Govans was still a village. Next to the house where I write, Frank Myerly picked peaches in a large orchard, now covered by Belvedere Square Shopping Center. Two fields away Eleanor Matthews milked her family's cows and delivered the milk in pails to neighbors along Bellona Avenue. Half a mile up dusty York Road, Cooper Walker was growing up on his family's farm, "Drumquhazel" and stopping his ears against the agonized cries of the slaughtered hogs bleeding to death by the old barn near where Caldor's department store now stands.

During the childhoods of those now in their eighties and nineties, York Road was a broad avenue lined with trees. A few houses and stores clustered at Woodbourne and Coldspring, and the No.8 streetcar ran up the east side — a lifeline to the bustle of Baltimore City. Folks had grown used to the new-fangled electric streetcars, but kids still came out of their houses to stare at gasoline powered motor cars or Stanley Steamers puffing up York Road. What they hardly noticed were the horses everywhere, pulling carts and buggies, and in teams of six or eight pulling the big wagons that came down from Pennsylvania on their way to market. Or in winter, pulling sleds that never got stuck in the snow — and it always snowed all winter in those days! Close to Govans, on his great estate "St. Mary's," Henry Walters the art collector raised Percheron dray horses imported from France. At the turn of the century, the horse was still literally the workhorse of America.

Govans old timers were born about the time Orville and Wilbur Wright made their first powered airplane flights at Kitty Hawk in 1903. And — some years ago now — they watched man walk on the moon and fly in a space shuttle. But these technological advances have perhaps made less impact on life in Govans than more mundane innovations, such as radio and television, cars and supermarkets, and the houses everywhere. And let's not forget that most wonderful of boons, the flush toilet! The coming of city sewers meant inside toilets and goodbye to the outhouse, cold and wet in winter,
Homeland old and new ...

The "Homeland" estate was farmed by the Perine family. This 1891 photo shows a mule team spreading organic fertilizer in the time-honored way. Below, the new Homeland estate was well established when this photo was taken in 1938.
smelly and flyblown in summer, a throwback to the middle ages.

To grow up in Govans even seventy years ago was to inhabit a very small world, a world circumscribed by family, school, and church. Children made their own entertainment, indoors and out. They didn't have television to entertain them, or to involve them in the adult world's concerns. They didn't witness murder and violence every day on TV, or see children starving or terrorist bombings, or share the all-pervasive fear of nuclear war. Their worries were closer to home: illnesses that couldn't be cured, brothers and sisters who took ill and died. Mothers who died in childbirth. Families were larger, but few were untouched by sorrow. On the other hand, there was no teen-age culture. Youngsters started work early. Parents were still very much in control. There were no drugs, no ghoulish rock and rap groups singing of rape and incest. It was a quieter life.

Even so, many things have remained the same. Govans residents still stop by at the hardware store to pick up some glue or nails and chat awhile with the storekeeper. Many still attend church on Sunday and repeat words that would have been familiar to their grandparents — though the Catholic Mass is no longer conducted in Latin, and the Book of Common Prayer is not what it used to be. And some old things are coming back. While one-stop supermarket shopping has replaced daily visits to the butcher, the baker, the grocer, and the greengrocer, today we are glad to pick up local fresh produce at Belvedere Square Market and be served by real people with a friendly word and a smile. And in some ways we are closer to our history, to our heritage, than our forefathers were.

Public television brings a wider world into our homes: history, drama, nature, science, music and the arts. Public radio brings us the music of Bach and Mozart and every period of musical history. Our branch library is well stocked with books and literature of all kinds. Life in Govans today may be more hectic, but is less limiting. We can drive to visit nearby places and fly to those farther off. Immigrants today do not bid a tearful farewell to the Old Country knowing they will never return. We can pick up our phones and call across town or around the world.

Marshall McLuhan, prophet of the Information Age, once said we now inhabit a "global village." Like most McLuhanisms, his statement was an attention-getting half-truth. Inhabiting a village means knowing where you belong, who's rich and who's poor, who's the master and who's the servant. That's why American young people today don't want to go on living in the small towns of America: they're too limiting. They want to follow in the steps of the Govans delivery boy, Francis X. Bushman, who went to Hollywood and became a movie star. Or at least go off to college.

There is no question that Govans-dwellers today are more detached from their community than they were a century ago — or are less entrapped by it, which is the other side of the coin. But by comparison with other big city neighborhoods Govans still retains many small-town features. Our ministers work together and have pioneered experiments like Epiphany House senior residence. Our merchants are organized as the Govanstowne Business Association and support community projects. Each neighborhood has its community association. York Road Area Planning Committee and its successors have worked to achieve the planned development of Govans' main street, the York Road corridor. All these are local initiatives, reinforcing our sense of living in Govans, a town within a town. And when things go wrong, there are always neighbors ready to help. In the streets of Govans, the best aspects of village life are still alive. They're worth holding onto.
Govans Village

Govans village can be said to date from a general trading store established about 100 yards-east of what is now York Road and Woodbourne Avenue, said to have been owned by James Govane. James inherited the family estate "Drumquhastle" from his father William Govane in 1763 and died in 1783, so the store must have been established within that time frame. A stone building, it was demolished between 1870 and 1875.

James Govane is also supposed to have owned a grist mill built on Chinquapin Run north of Woodbourne Avenue and to have lived in a stone cottage beside the mill. The cottage was pulled down as recently as 1945 and was described in an account dated 1908 in the Baltimore Sunday Sun:

"The original building must have been a low, square structure, with one of those sloping flat roofs of which our forefathers were so fond. A pretty stream of water runs by it, and on all sides run smooth fields, for it is in a hollow."

The mill was operational until 1878 and was demolished in 1903. Clearly some kind of mill was at that location, but whether the Govanes had anything to do with it is now in question. A recent study of the old land records by John W McGrain shows no mention of any mill there before 1833, when it was listed as a linseed oil mill owned by Isaac Kirk. We have to conclude that the rumored association of the mill with James Govane is apocryphal; in any case, a mill half a mile to the east of York Road, near where the Alameda is today, could have had little influence over the growth of Govanstown.

What did create the nucleus of a village was York Road and the needs of its travellers. In 1808 Susan Miller advertised the opening of her Govane's Town Tavern in the Baltimore American. It was located on the southeast corner of York and Woodbourne, close to the original Govane store. John Wooden, treasurer of the Baltimore Jockey Club, also established a tavern on York Turnpike north of Woodbourne Avenue. For the most part, these taverns served the farmers and travellers, providing food and lodging for men and horses as well as whiskey at three cents a glass. But Wooden's establishment was also close to the Govans race course, which held racing meets during the late summer and early fall which attracted Baltimore's fashionable gentry.

It was at this race track, according to some accounts, that Jerome Bonaparte, brother of the French Emperor Napoleon, met Betsy Patterson, a ravishing Baltimore beauty said by some to be "the most beautiful woman in the world." But this story, like that of Govane's Mill, also seems to be apocryphal. In Old Baltimore, Annie Souissat describes the ill-fated couple's first meeting as taking place at a new racetrack at Whetstone Point. Betsy's brother Joseph later bought some of the Govane estate and built "Evesham," one of the area's most impressive mansions, which his sister most probably visited. But "Evesham" was not built until 1857 and Joseph did not buy the property until 1846, whereas Betsy and Jerome were married in 1803. Where the Govanstown racetrack was located is also in doubt. Some say it was south of Woodbourne Avenue near where Wooden built his tavern, but it does not appear on any of the old maps. However, a racetrack is recorded in the Map of Govanstown, 1810 published in William Adams' biography, Commodore Joshua Barney. It was located just off Bellona Avenue south of Gittings Avenue, and to-
day would be bisected by Lake Avenue.

What is well documented is that Govanstown was the site of the first Baltimore County Agricultural Society's fair and cattle show in 1841 and again in 1842, when an exhibition area opposite Robert Ramsey's Hotel was added. By this time the Coldspring Lane area was also developing; the Coldspring Hotel opening about this time opposite the Abel's new Guilford estate and was the terminus of the omnibus service from Baltimore that started in 1844.

Meanwhile, the area north of Woodbourne Avenue was also developing. An important road intersection that attracted development at that time was at York Road and Bellona Avenue, originally called Betty Bush Lane. Bellona Mills, one of the largest gunpowder works in the country, was established on the Jones Falls where Lake Roland is now, in 1801. It was a hazardous operation plagued by frequent catastrophic explosions. The gunpowder was shipped in barrels far and wide, and much of the traffic to Baltimore passed down through Govanstown via the road now renamed Bellona Avenue. Other names of this old road were Powder Mill Road and Feather Bed Lane. Apparently gunpowder kegs were rolled before they were shipped on wagons — maybe to avoid dropping them! Bellona Avenue, named after the Roman goddess of war, was an old rolling road, like that still known as Rolling Road, which ran from Bellona Mills northwest to Pikesville.

So the intersection of York and Bellona was a natural site for stores and hostleries, and several were established there by mid-century. Foremost among them was the Govanstown Hotel — still surviving today as Epiphany House Senior Residence. In its long history the Govanstown Hotel has had almost as many names as proprietors: the Brick Hotel, Ulery's, Funk's Hotel, the Donald Apartments. Lee McCardell, in his *Govanstown's History*, describes the scene:

"Three or four hundred sleighs, tethered to the hitching racks of the Brick Hotel, were not an unusual sight after a heavy snow. The hotel's specialty was a $1 Maryland dinner. In later years a clay pigeon trap shooting range was established behind the hotel. For the farmers there was a big wagon yard and a separate building, heated by a huge stove, where the wagoners rested, chewed tobacco, and sometimes fell asleep in chairs around the stove."

Across Bellona Avenue, in the triangle, was the Guilford Hotel. While the Brick hotel depended mostly on farmers, bus parties, and sleighing parties, the Guilford cultivated the sporting set and had open air bowling alleys alongside.

We know little of the stores and other businesses that grew up along the turnpike until close to the end of the nineteenth century, when older Govans people began recording their reminiscences and a number of articles appeared in the *Baltimore Sun*. What we are sure of is that the growing "gentrification" of the Govans area, with wealthy "fancy farmers" buying estates and building great houses in the latest styles, must have generated business for the local merchants in addition to that generated by the turnpike.

"Though "fancy," in the sense that their owners did not rely on farming for their livelihood, the rural retreats of men like Enoch Pratt and William Walters were productive farms, with horses and cattle, crops and hay. What "powered" their economy, along with all the traffic along the York Road, was the horse, and horses had to be fed and shod and fettled and harnessed. Wagons and carriages had to be made and maintained. Govans around the turn of the century had no fewer than five blacksmiths' shops, two carriage shops, and numerous hay, feed, and seed stores. Across Bellona Avenue from the Guilford Hotel was John Munger's livery stable, where one could rent a horse, much as today one might rent a car. The stable was taken over by the Baltimore County Fire Department in 1890 and became the community's first engine house. It's still there, on Lyman Avenue, and has been converted into apartments.

Typical of the village stores that grew up in nineteenth century Govanstown was J.T. Norris's Central Store. After a few years in the 5800 block of York Road, Mr. Norris moved down to take over the old Guilford Hotel (later called Smith's Hotel), which he purchased in 1897. His son, J. Howard Norris, served as a delivery boy in his youth and later went to law school and became a judge at the Baltimore city tax court. Both he and his sister, Grace Norris Rodgers, contributed reminiscences
Betsy Patterson, called "the most beautiful woman in the world," is supposed to have met Napoleon's brother Jerome at Govans racetrack. This triple portrait by D'Almaine is taken from Gilbert Stuart's portrait. Her brother, Joseph Patterson, purchased part of the Drumquehastle estate in 1846 and built "Evesham" in the new Gothic revival style that came to dominate the Victorian era. "Evesham" was situated just north of where Northern Parkway runs today.
of old Govans to the *Baltimore Sun Magazine*. The store and lot were sold around 1937 to make way for an Esso gas station.

However, stores serving the village residents, the great estates, and travellers on York Road were by no means Govanstown's only businesses. H. B. L. Everding operated a factory where corn husks were ground up and stuffed into mattresses by means of a patent process. Lum Hubbard made carriages in his coach factory. But by far Govanstown's biggest industry was flower-growing, an outgrowth of the horticulture practiced on the great estates.

According to an article dated April 22, 1916 in the Towson *Jeffersonian*, "Flower-raising in hothouses is the one great industry of Govanstown, and the town boasts of almost a dozen nurseries." The best known of these was probably Rosebank Nurseries, off Bellona Avenue (near where Rosebank Avenue is today), owned by Captain W. D. Brackenridge. In his unpublished history of Govans William Tamburino describes Brackenridge as "formerly employed as a gardener on the Walters estate." Other sources say Captain Brackenridge was a member of the U.S. Exploring Expedition sent out in 1837 to survey the Western Lands, who returned with many species of plants with which he founded the Botanical Gardens in Washington, D.C. Clearly he was "an officer and a gentleman" as well as the master of a 24-acre Govanstown estate. Active in local Baltimore politics, Brackenridge cultivated the first orchids in Baltimore and many other exotic plants.

Another Govanstown horticulturist was I. H. Moss, son of Isaac Moss, Sr., caretaker of the Homeland Estate for David Perine in the 1850s. Moss built extensive greenhouses at York and Woodbourne and was the largest grower of flowers in Govans. It has been estimated that the Govanstown nurseries shipped 3,000 roses a day throughout the year, mostly to the southern states.

As housing developments replaced the great estates during the first half of the twentieth century, not only did the Govanstown landscape change from rural to urban, but its economic base also changed. Moss nurseries closed down, though the Moss named survived until 1985 on a number of area flower shops. Govanstown became a commuter suburb.

By mid-century local land became far too valuable to farm. The economic stagnation following the stock market crash of 1929 slowed development for awhile, but after the Second World War a new wave of development overtook Govans, as the area became known. With the construction of the Chinquapin Run housing developments, the last open land in Govans was built over, with the exception of a few park areas and school playing fields. At the same time, these developments linked Govanstown with other developing urban areas to the north, east, and west, so that the Village of Govanstown no longer had any visible boundaries and ceased to exist.

This pattern of urbanization, the transition from agricultural to suburban to urban, which was completed in Govans after mid-century, is now continuing far out along York Road past Cockeysville to the north. At first it was initiated by the major highway and accelerated after the laying of the streetcar tracks. The coming of the automobile detached residences from commuter lines, but still convenience to the city led to the subdivision of land and the building of housing developments until almost the last vacant lot had been built over.

I say "almost," because there is north of Clearspring Road a surviving undeveloped area known locally as the "green field," which residents have fought to protect from development. Owned by the Senator Theatre management, it adjoined the theatre parking lot, and was at one time much larger than it is today. But when the Senator lot was developed to build Staples, the parking area was extended and the green field curtailed. For some time now this field has been offered for sale for home building, but no one has come forward to purchase it. It seems clear that city property is no longer attractive for home building, or at least less attractive than lots in the outer suburbs. It may be that this is Govans' Last Green Field and should be commemorated with a historic marker.
The Govanes of Govanstown

James Govane Sr. immigrated from Scotland to Maryland in the early 1700s and became sheriff of Anne Arundel County. His son William prospered as an importer and shipowner and in 1755 received a grant of land from Frederick Calvert, the sixth Lord Baltimore.

This grant of 810 acres on the ridge of high ground dividing the watersheds of Herring Run and Jones Falls was made up of 520 acres of "Friends Discovery" patented by Job Evans in 1695, 98 acres of "Stones Delight" patented by Richard Taylor in 1717, and 50 acres called "Locust Neck" patented by Henry Morgan in 1744, along with "certain vacant land contiguous to the same." Morgan purchased these tracts and mortgaged them in 1746, but failed to make payments and lost them. Thence they passed to William Govane. The original land grant is displayed at Mount Clare mansion in Carroll Park.

William Govane patented the combined parcel of land as "Drumquehastle," the name of the Govanes' family estate in Scotland. By 1751 he had moved from Ann Arundel County to Baltimore County, for he represented Baltimore County in the Maryland House of Delegates from 1751 until 1758. He died in 1784 and his son William James Govane inherited the property. When he died in 1807 the estate was divided up, some passing to Mary Govane Howard, who donated the Union Chapel cemetery in 1847. The Howards continued to live in Ann Arundel County, though intermarried with the Myers family which remained in Govans until well into this century.

A headstone marking James Govane's grave used to rest in the old Govane cemetery close to where Drumcastle shopping center is now. When the manor house was pulled down, the Govane remains were removed to Greenmount cemetery. In 1988 they were located and reinterred in the old Govanstown cemetery attached to Govans Presbyterian Church.

Last resting place?
The remains of the Govane family retrieved from Greenmount cemetery are for the second time laid to rest in Govans, after having been removed from Drumquehastle, the family estate, some years earlier.
Above: The Perine family on the porch at "Homeland" in 1882: David, Washington, Father, George, Mildred, Rebecca, Tillie, Annie, Mother, "Jack" and pony cart. Note the penny-farthing bicycle against the porch steps.

Below: "Uncle Bill" William Anderson, in these 1891 photos by David Mauldin Perine. The original caption reads: "A former slave at Homeland. The Coachman in 1850. The gardener 30 years later. In our employ for 60 years."
The Perines of Homeland

The Perine Family hailed from Staten Island and originally spelled their name "Perrin." Mauldin Perine came to Baltimore in 1793. He married Hepzibah Brown of New Jersey and they had a son, David Mauldin, but died when the boy was three. His widow married William Buchanan and brought her little son to live on her husband's property, known then as "Job's Addition" after Job Evans, who added it to a tract of land he was granted in 1694. Hebzibah died in 1832 and her son David bought the property and added to it to create "Homeland," the 391 acres covered by the estate to this day.

In its heyday the estate included a manor house, a caretaker's house, stables, barns, a buttery, and nursery greenhouses. Although not great farming land, "Homeland" had excellent orchards and grazing, cultivated out of the original scrub pine that covered the area.

The estate was entered from York Road though a splendid gateway and gatehouse where St. Mary's Church now stands.

The first mansion house was located where the Homeland ellipse is today, on St. Alban's Way at Witherspoon, and could be seen from Bellona Avenue. A severe classical design by Robert Carey Long, it replaced a frame farmhouse dating from around 1797. Five years after its completion it was destroyed by fire in 1843. David Perine immediately began construction of a new house in the fashionable Italian style, also designed by Long, and it was completed in 1845. It survived until 1924, when the Roland Park Company tore it down to build Homeland development. David Perine was registrar of wills for Baltimore county. He married Mary Glenn from a neighboring farm and they had eight children.

The lakes or ponds that beautify Homeland today were planned by David Perine and were originally fed by a run-off of spring water piped to the manor. Though used as ice ponds, they were primarily ornamental, and though Perine stocked them with fish, this was to control the mosquitos and not for sport.

When Charles Street was extended through Homeland in 1854, the Perine Apple orchard was cut down. Wood from the trees was stored and used to make furniture in 1904. Two chairs made from this applewood are in the Maryland Historical Society collection, each carved with a different representation of the last two Homeland mansions.

In 1855 David Perine donated the land on which the Church of the Redeemer now stands. He also donated its parsonage and had it extended with stone cut from his quarry at Charles Street and Belvedere Avenue. The dip in the ground at that spot reveals where the old quarry used to be. As Barbara Stevens writes in Homeland, History and Heritage:

"In 1856 David Maulden Perine offered a choice of three parcels of his own land to the church. The church chose 1 1/2 acres to the north of the estate.... Three of his daughters 'helped' him to come to a decision on the location of the church in the following manner. They took wheelbarrows to the quarry and picked out four head-sized stones. They then took the stones and placed them at the four corners where they thought the church should be located. All having agreed upon the location, Mr. Perine asked, and the church agreed, that none of the land would be used for graves."

Another story concerning David Perine has
Three Houses at Homeland

This rather primitive drawing shows the south front of the first house at Homeland and is dated 1799-1839.

This elevation of the south front of the second house at Homeland is dated 1839. It was designed by Robert Carey Long in the neoclassical style and cost $40,000. It burned down in 1843.

The third house at Homeland was redesigned by Long in the fashionable Italianate style and was completed in 1846. While rebuilding was in process, the Perines moved into the caretaker’s house.
come down to us. It seems that during the Civil War he was a southern sympathizer. As Barbara Stevens tells it:

"His carriage horses were taken from his stable at "Homeland" by a captain in the Union Army as a "military necessity." Perine summoned the Captain, told him he knew his parents, and remarked that they would not approve of their son having taken his neighbor's horses. Perine was able to persuade the captain to return the horses the same night. They were not molested again."

Elias Glenn Perine succeeded his father as master of Homeland in 1882. He did well as a stockbroker and was able to retire at 36, at which age he married Eliza Ridgely Beall Washington, a great great niece of George Washington. They had thirteen children. He gave the land on which Govans Branch Library now stands. It opened on September 21, 1921, and old Mr. Perine was issued the first library card. He was then 92 years old, and died the following year, in 1922.

Stories are told about David M. Perine as about his father. He is said to have crept up on the village boys swimming in the lakes and hidden their clothes. When paying his large staff, he always gave out silver dollars rather than dollar bills, because he once had two bills stick together, causing a deficit in the accounts. Lillian Ballard wrote about the skaters that came out in winter to skate on the frozen ponds. "I can still see the bright flashing colors of the skaters' clothing and hear their shouts of merriment," she told Mrs. Stevens.

After Elias Perine's death the city of Baltimore considered acquiring Homeland as a public park, but the money was not forthcoming. In 1924 the estate was purchased by the Roland Park Company for around $1,000,000. Shortly thereafter the Sunday Sun Magazine included an advertisement announcing lots in the new Homeland development would go on sale. By the end of the first day 89 lots had been sold; after sixteen days, 248.

Today Homeland is one of North America's most attractive residential developments. It was planned by the same company that developed

*The "Homeland" caretaker's house is the only structure of the original estate to survive today.*
Guilford and Roland Park, started by a British investment company. Many Homeland streets bear names reminiscent of the British Isles, and the homes include many British influences. The Roland Park Company was a pioneer in establishing protective restrictions regulating domestic development, and the Homeland estate like its predecessors was supervised by a committee of architects. The homes are somewhat smaller than those of Guilford and were aimed at younger families. Few young families can afford them today!

Modern Homelanders have always tended to distance themselves from Govans, much as universities distanced themselves from their local townships. But the old reserve between the workaday Govans villagers and the genteel Homelanders is breaking down. Both now shop at Belvedere Square and attend civic functions. Though the old Homeland is no more, the new Homeland is exemplary of its kind, and where the herded cows once grazed, the suburban peace is almost as undisturbed.

Thanks to David M. Perine, the Homeland estate is well-documented with photos taken in 1891. Above: the barnyard, with cows. Below, the carriage house.
The wagon-shed, tool house, and hay loft

The Great Gates at Homeland

The Barn, built in 1840, had 15 horse stalls
"Tivoli," the great house on Enoch Pratt's 95-acre estate south of Woodbourne Avenue, is always associated with the Baltimore businessman and philanthropist, but it was not built by him. Who built the Italianate mansion, named after the Roman suburb where the famous Villa d'Este is located, is obscure, but it dates from around 1855. Enoch Pratt purchased it in 1870 for $35,000 from Robert Lehr, along with five tracts of land which had originally belonged to British loyalists (Tories) and were confiscated after the Revolution.

Like all the other great Govanstown estates, Tivoli was a working farm as well as its owner's summer home. The estate produced "50 tons of good hay" annually, as well as garden produce and all kinds of fruit. But Enoch Pratt maintained angrily to the tax authorities that his farm was not profitable:

"Don't put it on us poor devils who only get forty cents a bushel for our corn. We can't live. It costs me $5,000 a year to run my place, without any income from it. Everything is primitive on the farm. I have two cows, but they are both dry and we don't get any milk from them. I have two streams on the place. One of them is about as wide as Niagara Falls and has cost me $1,000. In the past years property in my neighborhood has been going down. You had better let the whole matter go until the new assessment, and don't bother yourselves. That is my advice to you. You have got more taxable basis now than you ought to have."

There is no question that Enoch Pratt deserves his fame as a public benefactor. He founded the Enoch Pratt Free Library. He left much of his property, including "Tivoli," to Sheppard Hospital. He gave a building to the Academy of Sciences. But among local Govans folks he had a reputation as a rich skinflint. Stories of his parsimony abound. It is said he wore shabby old clothes unbefitting to a gentleman. One day when he was returning to Tivoli on foot, he was hailed by a tramp coming out. "There's no use going in there, brother," said the tramp, "you won't get a damned crust." Pratt's response is unrecorded.

Older residents remember Mr. Pratt driving his buggy round the side roads over sandbanks to avoid paying the 5¢ toll at the tollbooth. J. Howard Norris, whose father owned Norris's general store at York and Bellona, told how Mr. Pratt would always do his own shopping and would weigh every loaf in the store until he found one weighing the full 16 ounces—the correct weight for a 5¢ loaf. If they were all underweight, he would stride out angrily. When the first telephone in Govans was installed at Norris's Store, Pratt asked to use it and was told the call would cost him 10c. He left saying "I'll ride into town first. It's cheaper." Norris, who knew Pratt personally when he worked as a delivery boy for his pa, went on to graduate from law school and became a judge. Writing in the Sun in 1953 of his boyhood days, he observed "Enoch Pratt, in spite of his great gift to the City, was personally the worst miser I ever knew." It is said he prowled the reading rooms of the Library he founded, turning off the lights. . . .

So there you have it — the Enoch Pratt paradox: a benefactor and philanthropist on the grand scale; a skinflint and curmudgeon closer to home: pound wise, penny foolish. Yet Enoch Pratt may have cultivated his careful New England image. Asked by a young woman to what he attributed his
good health in later life, he replied he "went to parties, danced, played cards, and drank all the champagne that anyone else paid for." But his guests said they received good food and excellent wine at "Tivoli". And Farmer Pratt is said to have loved his chestnut horses and had a soft spot for his pigs, whose backs he liked to scratch with a long stick.

Enoch Pratt was born in North Middleborough, Mass. in 1808. His father was in the nail business, and at fifteen he got a job in a hardware supply house in Boston. At 22 he felt ready to go into business for himself. With a note for $150.00 in his pocket he came to Baltimore and opened a warehouse on South Charles Street wholesaling nails, spikes, and shoes for horses and mules. His business prospered, and he branched out into railroads, canals, banking, and insurance. After the Civil War he bought the Maryland Steamship company — and named one of his steamers "Tivoli."

Pratt supported the North in the Civil war, which made him unpopular in Baltimore Confederate circles. After the war, he and several other New Englanders who had prospered during the war and were despised by Baltimore's southern faction, formed a kind of colony near Govanstown. Pratt continued to live there for nearly 30 years and died at "Tivoli" in 1896.

Tivoli is a fine, rusticated stone, three-storey mansion in the Italian style popular in the nineteenth century. In Enoch Pratt's time it had balconies running around three sides of the house, which were removed when it became an orphanage. It was unusual in having a stream run right through the house and stable, which once powered a grist mill by turning a seven-foot overshot wheel. The stream provided cool fresh water to all floors. In a Sun article dated August 12, 1888, "Tivoli" is described as "one of the finest and best-appointed country places in Baltimore County." It was then lighted by gas "made by a Maryland gas engine...." In addition to a billiard room and rooms for entertaining on the ground floor, "The upper floors have a large number of bedrooms and there is room enough for seventy-five children to live comfortably"- an inspired guess at what the house was eventually to become.

After Pratt's death the house was sold to C. S. Abell for $50,000 in 1899. Gradually during the next 25 years the estate was sold off in parcels to developers. In 1930 the property was purchased as an orphanage by the Children's Home of Baltimore. In 1966 the home's name was changed to Woodbourne Center, and it became an institution for disturbed adolescents. Now confined to a mere 13 acres, it remains one of the few great estate houses to survive in the Govans area today.
The Walters and St. Mary's

The Walters' palatial home, "St. Mary's," set amid 133 acres north of Woodbourne Avenue, with greenhouses filled with orchids and other exotic plants, was the jewel in the crown of Govanstown country estates. There William T. Walters raised his Percheron horses imported from France and housed some of his immense art collection, later donated to the people of Baltimore as the Walters art collection and gallery.

"The house looked just like a castle in a fairy tale," wrote Dorothy Earp in her reminiscence "Govans as I Remember It." "In my lifetime it was not occupied, though it was said to be ready for Mr. Henry Walters should he wish to return at any time. He left after the death of his mother and went to live in New York, but the house was cleaned regularly and kept in readiness for his return. I once had a peep inside the entrance hall — a hat, gloves, and a cane lay across a table just as Mr. Walters left them." Every week Mr. Burns, the gardener, sent flowers and fruit by train to New York, where Henry Walters lived. "When Mr. Burns found that my grandfather was a florist he let me come in the greenhouses and look around. To a little girl, only used to seeing flowers grown in quantity for sale, it was like a dream. So many different kinds of plants and flowers plus fruit trees and grape vines espaliered against the glass — such as seen only in fancy stores. There I saw my first orchid."

Young Dorothy's photo of St. Mary's is one of the few that survive of this great house. A lot more is known about the Walters, father and son, who did so much for art in America and bequeathed the most important private art collection in the U.S. to this city.

Born in Liverpool, Pennsylvania in 1820 of Scotch-Irish parents, William T. Walters was educated as a civil and mining engineer. He explored the mountains of western Pennsylvania in search of coal deposits and when only 21 managed the first steel mill in America to use coal-fired furnaces. However, Walters was a businessman by inclination, and soon after moved to Baltimore and set up as a commission agent.

He soon prospered selling Pennsylvanian agricultural products and quickly moved into other areas of trade: steamship lines, banking, and railroads. Before long he controlled all the southern railroads and became immensely rich — but he was no vulgar money-grubber. It is said the first dollars he ever earned, he spent on a picture, and throughout his life he set aside a proportion of the profits of his many companies to purchase art. In 1861 he visited Europe and stayed four years, purchasing art and meeting most of Europe's outstanding artists. It was in France that Walters encountered the Percheron horse, a noble breed he imported back to the States and bred at St. Mary's. The Percheron — about which Walters wrote a book still available at the Walters Art Gallery — was a heavily built workhorse suitable for ploughing or drawing dray vehicles, not a fancy racehorse of the kind often bred by wealthy landowners. Walters is said to have owned four stallions and seven mares, and used them to draw vehicles on his estate. At the time of his death, William Walters was president of the Peabody Conservatory.

Born in 1848, William Walters' son Henry graduated from Georgetown University and studied science at Harvard. He inherited his father's business acumen and love of art. He purchased entire art collections, such as the Massarenti col-
lection of early Italian art, for which he paid $1 million, and chartered a special ship to bring it to Baltimore.

William Walters lived most of the year at 5 Mt. Vernon Place, which he opened to the public in 1870. He charged a small admission fee, which he donated to the Poor Association. Some $30,000 was raised for charity in this way from 1884 to 1894, when he died. Henry Walters lived in New York, only occasionally visiting his Baltimore homes. Henry shunned publicity and was regarded as something of a mystery. However, he built a public gallery to house most of his art collection, which opened in 1909, and bequeathed it to the City of Baltimore at his death in 1931. His other passion was ocean racing yachts, which he built to defend the America's Cup in days when such racers were twice as big as they are today. St. Mary's was built in the Swiss chalet style popular in the mid-1800s. It remained unlived-in except for servants during Henry Walters' later life. In 1924 the house was purchased for $130,000 by Julius Levy, who had a mind to turn the property into a golf club. Clearly this didn't happen. The old house was torn down, though the gatehouse survived until the 1940s. The property is now the site of Chinquapin Middle School.

Right: The gatehouse to St. Mary's estate on Woodbourne Avenue survived some years after the mansion was demolished.

Below: One of the very few surviving photos of the Walters' great house, St Mary's.
The York Road and Turnpike

The earliest maps of north Baltimore show a road meandering north toward York, Pennsylvania long before the York turnpike was constructed. Some say it was an old Indian trail that ran all the way from Canada to the Chesapeake Bay. Certainly there was an Indian burial ground near the lakes in what is now Homeland. The York Road through the Govane property followed a ridge of high ground sloping down to what is now Chinquapin Run to the east and Stony run to the west.

Though a rutted dirt road which crossed several streams (one near today’s Belvedere Avenue), this road developed into a major highway carrying goods and people to and from the rich agricultural region of southern Pennsylvania. It, and other roads like it running to Frederick and Reisterstown, was maintained after a fashion by a flat tax — but the condition of the roadbed was deplorable. The trip from Hampton Mansion north of Towson to downtown Baltimore took from seven to nine hours, and frequently rainstorms left the highway a sea of mud in which carts and carriages bogged down to their axles.

In 1785 the Baltimore County legislature was besieged with petitions urging the County to implement a better system of highways. Two years later, in 1787, a grand jury found that county highways had gone unrepaired for the past two years and declared the situation a public grievance. In response, the legislature provided that several new turnpikes be constructed in the county, beginning with the York, Frederick, and Reisterstown highways. Legislators pointed out — as they do today — that the cost of improvements would be more than compensated by the increased volume of trade the new roads would make possible.

A turnpike differed from a regular colonial road in that user fees were levied at intervals specifically to maintain the road surface. It was managed by a court-appointed official who could be held responsible for its condition. Turnpike roads were leveled and widened and surfaced with stones or gravel. At that time no other county was as advanced in highway planning as Baltimore County. But planning was one thing and getting the turnpikes built was something else. In 1788 a penal
statute was passed which allowed criminals to be sentenced to work on Baltimore County roads. With this source of labor, the County saw no reason to employ hired laborers. In fact, the convict road gangs cost more and accomplished less than hired laborers. By the 1790s, public construction of the turnpikes was regarded as a failure. The turnpikes to Reisterstown and Washington were turned over to private investors in 1796 and 1797, but they were undercapitalized and failed.

The Baltimore and York-town Turnpike was incorporated as a private company in 1805. $100,000 of stock was offered for sale in 1807, and work on the road began in 1808. Construction contracts were awarded for one-mile segments, and within two years the project was completed. At the state line, the York and Maryland Line Turnpike Road Company picked up where the BYT ended.

The first toll-house was built at Waverly, near 31st Street, in 1808. The Govans tollgate was at Rossiter Avenue. The toll houses were staffed by a gatekeeper who didn't live on the premises. They were 20 by 14 feet and one and a half stories high, shingled, and heated by a stove "not to cost more than $30.00."

The gatekeeper's duty was to open the gate across the turnpike to those who paid the tolls. A horse and rider were charged one sixteenth of a dollar for every ten miles travelled. The toll for a wagon depended on the number of horses pulling it and the width of its wheels — the narrower the wheels, the more the charge — because the narrower wheels did most damage to the surface! Herdsmen were charged according to the number of animals in the herd. Those who brought crushed oyster shells to use as road surfacing could forego the toll.

The tollgates were very unpopular, and avoiding paying the toll was common. Avoiding paying the toll was originally punishable by a fine of 20 shillings — a considerable amount — and if a servant or slave did so, they were to receive 20 lashes and their master fined ten shillings. Later, these cruel penalties were repealed, but resentment of the tolls continued. Enoch Pratt protested them by driving his trap round the side roads and up and over sandbanks to avoid paying the toll. He hated tax collectors as much as any rich merchant does today! A major increase in tolls in 1864 sparked widespread protests, and some challenged
the tolls in the courts, without success. When bicycles became popular in the 1890s, their riders joined the farmers and other travellers objecting to the tolls.

Meanwhile, the turnpikes' investors reaped small dividends on their investments, commonly receiving only 4% in a good year. In 1910 the York Turnpike was sold to the State Road Commission for only $1,000. The end of the tollgates was a cause for jubilation. The turnpike was by then an idea whose time had passed, and no one regretted its passing.

**Right:** The tollgates and tollbooths operated from the beginning of the turnpike through the streetcar era. This old photo dates from the early 1900s.

**Below:** York Road looking south from near St. Mary's Church around 1942. Note the streetcar islands to protect passengers, which caused many car accidents.

**Opposite page, top:** The Bellona Triangle in 1935, occupied by an ESSO station. Bellona Avenue is unpaved.

**Opposite page, bottom:** The Bellona Triangle in 1987, now planted by the Govanstown Business Association and used as a reviewing stand for parades. The War Memorial was added, with flagstaff, after World War II.
Wagon Houses

"Govanstown many years ago was a great overnight stopping place for farmers who were on their way to Baltimore from Pennsylvania. There were at least half a dozen wagon houses in Govanstown at that time. The farmers would put up at these places for the night. On market days they poured into the town in large numbers and the floors of the houses were used to great advantage. Blankets and comforts were stretched on the floors and on these the farmers rested for the night. Herman Everding, who keeps a feed store on the York road opposite the Govanstown Hotel, well remembers the operation of the wagon houses. 'When I was a boy,' said Mr. Everding, 'it was not unusual to see a couple of dozen farmers coming down the road with their teams, forming one long line. They usually arrived late in the evening. As a rule they came from Pennsylvania together, for it was a rather dangerous undertaking to come along the dark roads alone. They would pull up at these wagon houses, unhitch their horses, put them in a barn in the rear of the stopping place, and then prepare for their night's rest. In fact, there was no need for preparation. It was just a matter of lying down and going to sleep. I remember seeing rows and rows of farmers stretched out upon the floors of these houses. With the exception of their boots and hats, they went to sleep fully clothed. Blankets were spread on the floor in rows and very little space was lost. A narrow aisle, just large enough to allow a man to pass through, was the only space not in use. There were a number of these wagon-houses throughout the town, and all did a thriving business." — *The Jeffersonian*, April 22, 1916

ULERY'S
GOVANSTOWN HOTEL,
(See Illustration on opposite page)
FOUR MILES FROM BALTIMORE,
ON YORK ROAD.

BREAKFASTS AND SUPPERS
Served at Short Notice.

CARS PASS THE HOTEL, EACH WAY,
Every Half Hour.

The great hotels of Govanstown - Ulery's and The Guilford — were clearly a cut above the wagon houses.

The Govanstown Hotel — or what's left of it—is certainly Govans' oldest surviving building. Known previously as the Govanstown Hotel, Ulery's Govanstown Hotel, Funk's Hotel, and the Brick Hotel, it was converted into apartments in 1922 and became The Donald Apartments. Later, a row of shops was added fronting the street, which did little to improve the appearance of the building. In 1988 it was converted again and became Epiphany House Senior Residence. These conversions were radical and greatly changed the appearance of the building, so the hotel in the drawings and old photos is no longer recognizable. A report by Fred Shoken for the Commission on Historic and Architectural Preservation concluded "the existing structure has little relation to the historic Govanstown Hotel."
The pride of Govanstown emanates from horses and humans in this fine line drawing, which is also a study in nineteenth century transportation. Note the sporty open traps, the enclosed carriage, and — the wave of the future — the horse-drawn streetcar soon to be revolutionized by electricity.

Built around 1840, the original hotel was an "L" shaped structure with ornate Italianate "gingerbread" decorated galleries on the first and second stories.

In his History of Govans, Lee McCardell contrasts the Brick Hotel with The Guilford, its posh rival across the street in the Bellona Triangle. "The Guilford Hotel, operated by Charles Schmidt, was equipped with open air bowling alleys and catered to the sporting class. But Louis Ritter, proprietor of the Brick Hotel, depended largely upon farmers, bus parties, and, during the winter months, sleighing parties from Baltimore."

"Three or four hundred sleighs, tethered to the hitching racks of the Brick Hotel, were not an unusual sight after a heavy snow. The hotel's specialty was a $1.00 Maryland dinner. In later years a clay pigeon trap shooting range was established behind the hotel. For the farmers there was a big wagon yard and a separate building, heated by a huge stove, where the wagoners rested, chewed tobacco, and sometimes fell asleep around the stove."

The location of these two hotels at York and Bellona was crucial to their success, at a time when Govans offered a convenient resting place for the drivers of teams of up to eight horses drawing wagons from Pennsylvania into Baltimore. Later they offered a pleasant drive-out by carriage or sleigh from Baltimore City. But when trucks and automobiles superseded the horse-drawn carts and carriages, such a stopping-off point was no longer needed.

The Donald Apartments conversion of the Brick Hotel removed the "L" shaped wing and created a row of retail stores along the front.

The re-conversion into Epiphany House Senior Residence restores some of the charm of the old hotel, but is less ornate. It now includes an elevator essential for the frail elderly who reside there—which would not have been possible if the building had been protected as a historic monument.
The glory days of the old Govanstown hotel are captured in the 1909 photo at left. Bunting, flags, lanterns must have celebrated some great event. By the 1970s, the finery is gone (above). As Epiphany House Senior Residence the storefronts are removed and quiet dignity is restored.


**Streetcar Days**

In 1844 an omnibus began to run between Monument Square downtown and the Coldspring Hotel in Govanstown. It travelled the turnpike and moved laboriously over the dirt road.

In 1858 the Baltimore and Yorktown Turnpike Railway was incorporated and started work laying track in 1863. Its first cars reached Govanstown on July 16 of that year. They were double-decker vehicles that ran on parallel tracks on the east side of York Turnpike, one going up-town and one downtown. The upper deck was roofed, and its sides were covered by canvas that could be raised or lowered. Some say the upper deck was for men only — women finding it too windy to keep their skirts down; others say that African Americans had to ride upstairs.

Two horses pulled the cars, which often moved not much faster than walking pace. A man with a third horse was stationed at the bottom of hills to help the team up the incline. When they reached the top he uncoupled his horse and returned to the bottom of the hill. Even so, passengers sometimes had to get off and walk up the steeper hills when the car was loaded.

In winter the horsedrawn cars were heated by stoves and had straw on the floor to help keep the passengers' feet warm. When electric powered cars replaced the horsedrawn vehicles, they had electric heaters. After heavy snowfalls the railway substituted sleighs for the wheeled cars.

Electric powered trolleys replaced horse drawn cars around 1890. Power was carried on an overhead wire and transmitted through a long pole on top of the streetcar roof with a roller at the end. The electric cars were single-deckers — open in summer and closed in winter. Later, a "convertible" car was introduced that could have windows added during the winter months. Passenger cars were most common, but there were also mail cars, security cars carrying payrolls, and "Dolores," a funeral car that accommodated both the casket and the mourners. All the larger cemeteries were served by streetcar lines.

The No.8 line serving Govans was one of the longest in the land — 30 miles from Towson to Catonsville. Govans was notable as the point where some cars turned around to go back downtown or went on to Towson. Initially the cars were merely switched from one track to the other via "Griffin's Switch" (named after the nearby general store); later the longer cars with trailers attached needed a loop in order to turn around, and this was located where a restaurant is today. The trailers were introduced during the first world war to accommodate more passengers without adding more electric cars or personnel: they all had a motorman up front and a conductor to take the fares at the rear.

During the twenties the York Road streetcar tracks were moved from the east side of the street into the middle in the interests of safety. Islands were built in the road to protect passengers getting on and off, with warning lamps lighted at night. These proved dangerous to cars, especially if the lights were out at night. They were very unpopular. Dorothy Earp remembers the car tracks when they were still down the east side of York Road: "My earliest memories were of the old trolley with a motorman and a conductor. They know everyone who rode regularly with them. If you went to sleep they woke you when it came to your street. I remember most kindly a fat, jolly motorman we called 'Apple Butter' His wife made this delicious concoction, and he stopped off along the road to deliver her orders. My mother-in-law was quite
favorite of his; she liked to shop at Lexington mar-
ket and would meet the car at Eutaw and Fayette,
where he would get off and take her huge basket
and help her on. Then, when they arrived at Beau-
mont Avenue, he would help her off and take her
basket across the road. Truly personal service! An-
other character was Willie Griffin. His father had a
store at the Switch, and instead of calling out
'Griffin's Switch!' he would call out 'Papa's Store!'"

The streetcar service was a lifeline between
Govanstown and Baltimore for more than a hun-
dred years. In an age before automobiles gave most
families mobility, it served as the primary people-
mover, enabling communities to commute to and
from the city center smoothly, reliably, and economi-
cally. It was ridden by everyone, from the master of
"Homeland" on down. The streetcar companies were
pioneers in the settlement of city communities, just
as the railroads were pioneers in the settlement of
the American west. In Baltimore they sponsored
attractions like Riverside Park and Glenarm to keep
the public travelling weekends as well as every day
to work and back.

With the coming of the automobile for all
except the very poor, public transportation went into
a decline. Cars literally ran the streetcars off the
road. But the buses that replaced them have never
captured the public's imagination like the old
streetcars, now regarded by older Baltimoreans
with fondness and nostalgia.

The last streetcar pulled into the Car Barn
on November 2, 1963, crowded with streetcar
buffs filled with disappointment but eager to share
a historic moment. Now, if they want to relive the
way it was and hear again the "ting, ting" of the
trolley bell, they must visit the Baltimore Street-
car Museum, where a slice of Govans history is
perpetually preserved.
Above: Streetcars came in several styles: for normal passenger use, as mail carriers, and as funeral cars serving cemeteries around town. "Dolores," a somber black car, carried funeral parties along with the casket.

Below: The end of the line for streetcars came in 1963, when streetcar buffs vied to ride the last car into the Govans Streetcar Barn. This photo of the Govans Loop was taken by Dorothy Earp shortly before the line closed down.
Above: This photo, captioned "Double-deck horse car on York Road line in 1883-84" shows a typical early streetcar in its summer plumage. Passengers could take the air on the upper deck and let down the canvas sides if it rained.

Below: The Govans Car Barn housed streetcars when not in use. A huge, cavernous building, it has been put to several uses since it closed in 1963. Streetcars were powered by steam engines in the Power Plant in the Inner Harbor.
Maenner’s Market, 5721 York Road, is typical of a tradition of Govans stores dating back to earliest times. Often the storekeeper would live above the store, and families would span three generations.

Govans Merchants

The first merchants along the York Road, apart from the hotels and hostelries, were general stores of the kind still found in some small towns. Reminiscences of older residents often mention their visits to local stores as children and the wonder of the myriad items they offered for sale. Other stores were located along main shopping streets, and most dealt in one commodity, such as butchers, bakers, grocers, and hardware stores.

The early twentieth century brought the department store which sold a wide range of merchandise, and by mid-century the supermarket, which economized by letting customers browse the aisles and serve themselves before paying for merchandise at checkout counters.

Many young people will not know the experience of taking a shopping list to a store clerk behind the counter and asking for items one by one, while he walked around finding the items requested. Shopping then took longer, but was more, personal — and some shoppers asked the storekeeper to add the bill to their account, if their credit was good. Servants would come to shop for their employers at the big house, often the housekeeper or her maid.

Hochschild-Kohn department store, now part of Belvedere Square at York Road and Belvedere Avenue, was one of the very first to be located in the suburbs. Most department stores were located downtown — in Baltimore, on Howard Street. Govans families would take the streetcar downtown to shop at these big stores once a week or before important holidays.

The trend in recent years has been towards shopping malls, at first rows of stores surrounded by parking lots, later evolving into enclosed, multi-level shopping extravaganzas with their own multi-level parking garages. Since these required large spaces to build on, most were located in the outer suburbs, where they attract shoppers from a wide area with their style, ambience, variety, and promise of protection. Whereas the old-style street stores evolved to serve pedestrians, the new malls are geared to automobile traffic. Another recent innovation in retailing is the warehouse discount store, akin to the department store but featuring specialty merchandise at rock-bottom prices.

All these developments make life difficult for merchants on shopping corridors like York
Belvedere Market, part of Belvedere Square, aims to combine mall shopping convenience with the intimacy and personal service of small independent stores. It attracts shoppers from all around.

Road, which lack convenient free parking, a wide variety of merchandise, and the ability to purchase items at bulk prices.

One way to help upgrade shopping corridors like York Road has been the Retail Business District Licensing program (described in the section on Govans' organizations), which assesses businesses to fund corridor improvements. Another has been to develop mini-malls which try to combine the quality and personal service of individual stores with the convenience and parking of larger malls. Belvedere Square is a local example.

Rasch's Bakery and Ice Cream Parlor, at York Road and Winston Avenue, was one of a number of such stores mentioned by older residents as places where young people would congregate after school. In this photo, York Road is still not paved and the streetcar lines can be seen in front of the store.
Local businesspeople long ago began forming organizations to address common concerns. Here board members of the Govanstowne Business Association gather to dedicate a new sign outside the association office at 5000 York Road in 1988.
Govans' Taverns

What was to become the village of Govanstown had its origin in a tavern established near where York Road and Woodbourne Avenue intersect today. One of its first tavern keepers was John Wooden, treasurer of the Baltimore Jockey Club, which held race meets on a course near the tavern every summer. This brought the sporting set to Govans and was one reason why the village was selected as the site for the first Baltimore County Agricultural Fair in 1841. But most of the tavern’s customers were farmers and wagoners who watered their four, six, or eight horse teams at its pump, treated themselves to a three cent glass of whiskey, or availed themselves of a bed for the night.

Soon John Wooden’s Inn was joined by the Star Tavern, the Cold Spring Tavern, the Cross Hotel — and in the 1840s, by the impressive Brick Hotel and Guilford Hotel facing each other where York Road joins Bellona Avenue (the Brick Hotel is now Epiphany House senior residence). These substantial edifices attracted crowds of Baltimoreans summer and winter, in addition to local residents and turnpike travellers.

Taverns do not figure prominently in any region’s recorded history — except when an occasional fight broke out and the disturbers of the peace were hauled off to the local lockup. But temperance groups were constantly railing against the “demon rum,” and during the last half of the nineteenth century the Anti-Saloon League was successfully agitating for the sale of intoxicating liquor to be banned, first in individual states and later across the nation. Some states were “wet” and some “dry,” and many states allowed the licensing of taverns to be a local option. In November, 1918 the Wartime Prohibition Act was passed — a foretaste of the total prohibition that became law with the ratification of the 18th Amendment prohibiting the sale of any beverage containing more than 1/2 of one percent of alcohol in 1919.

For awhile virtue was triumphant, but just about every community had its speakeasy and still in the woods. One Govans resident recalls how one day a huge explosion rocked the Woodbourne Avenue area when an illicit still exploded. Cooper Walker recounts how his grandmother, Miss Lucy, the strict Mistress of Drumquhazel, forbade anyone to sell liquor within one mile of the manor. But in the backyard a swarm of yellow jackets buzzed around a barrel of hard cider guaranteed to raise the spirits no less than gin or whiskey.

Many of Govans’ older taverns came into being with the repeal of prohibition in 1933. John Field opened Field’s Old Trail, 5706 York Road, in 1934, across the road from where it is now. His son Harry still tends the bar there, but remembers how different bars were in those days. Women were not only unwelcome in the stag bar but were warned off by his mother, Mary. He remembers as a young man having to clean out the great spittoon trough at the end of the day, wearing elbow length rubber gloves. Some patrons were not too particular about what they vented in the trough, either....

Andy’s Restaurant and Bar, 4705 York Road, was opened in 1948 by Andrew and Mary Lambros, after World War II. It was an Irish neighborhood in those days, Mrs. Mary Lambros remembers. They opened on St. Patrick’s Day, and every year they celebrated the anniversary along with the Saint of the Emerald Isle. Everyone wore favors and derbies and drank green beer and danced and fought like true sons of Erin. Andy’s in those days was also a Colt hangout, and several of the team lived in the neighborhood. Johnny Unitas and
Arthur Donovan would often be found there. "In those days they played football for love, not for money," says Mrs. Lambros wistfully. Corned beef and cabbage was 17¢.

Bars often pass from hand to hand and sometimes hop from one spot to another. Gus Funk owned a bar where Thompson's is now at York and Belvedere, but allegedly lost it in a crap game to Bill Cahill in the 1940s. Swallow at the Hollow was once across York Road near where Jerry's Belvedere is now. It moved in 1952 when taken over by Irving "Skeggy" Becker and Charley Stulz. (Someone said Skeggy, at 5' 4", played center for the Jewish Community Center basketball team.) The Hollow burned in 1979, but was restored. The present dining room was once a barber's shop.

Jerry's Belvedere Tavern was once a five-and-dime. The original Belvedere Tavern was next door, torn down to make way for Northern Parkway. In 1989 Jerry's got a complete face-lift, with a new facade and a redesigned interior.

Meanwhile, new bars are always being born. Murphy's Govans Bar and Grill features live entertainment with an Irish flavor in the old Govans tradition. And Gator's Pizza Pub has extended its bar and is now adding a liquor store alongside.

Two hundred years have not changed the tavern scene very much in Govanstown. Parking lots have replaced hitching posts, but the cheery warmth of the local tavern still attracts the tired and weary after the day's work is done.
Everything changes ... yet everything stays the same

Field's Old Trail, 5706 York Road, has been a Govans watering hole since 1934. The top photo was taken in 1938, the middle photo in the early 1950s, and the bottom photo in 1987.

The time elapsed between 1938 and 1987 is not a large slice of the history of Govans, and the bar scene has changed less than many. All those depicted here are males, sitting on hard stools or propping up the bar. The decor is not so much spartan as absent, and the array of bottles and photos, beer and liquor ads, has remained much the same. But students of social behavior will notice some changes: the bartender’s dress has become less formal, and businessmen no longer wear hats. Young people of both sexes now flock to bars like Gator’s Pub at York and Belvedere, and some women are acquiring a taste for beer. . . .
Parades and Celebrations

Parades commemorating important events are one of the traditional ways America celebrates. The date of Govanstown's first parade is unrecorded, but the Govanstown racetrack located near where Gittings Avenue runs today was the site of the first Baltimore County Fair in 1841. For over a century Govanstown celebrated the glorious Fourth of July with mammoth parades followed by fireworks displays that attracted crowds from far and wide. In recent memory these parades were organized by Veterans of Foreign Wars, the VFW.

Sometime after World War II the VFW moved the parade to Memorial Day and staged a march past the War Memorial at York and Bellona with jet fighters roaring overhead. The event died out around the time of the Vietnam war, when for awhile patriotic parades went out of style. But in 1987 the VFW had the old flagpole repainted, the Govanstowne Business Association planted flowers in the Bellona Triangle, and the stage was set for another great parade.

The opportunity occurred when Govans celebrated the bicentennial of York Turnpike with a grand parade on October 4, 1987. It started at the City Line at Walker Avenue, passed the reviewing stand at the War Memorial at York and Bellona Avenue, and continued to Coldspring Lane.

That parade — like many that went before — included marching bands, ceremonial colors, decorated floats and vehicles, horses, civic leaders in convertibles, and a few small boys and stray dogs bringing up the rear — as in olden times. Among the participants were the Boumi Temple, the Calvert Hall Band, the John F. Nichol (Scottish) Pipe Band, the Hamilton Knights Dram and Bugle Corps, the Baltimore Westsiders, and local merchants and social organizations.

The Govanstown parades may yet be restored to their former glory.
Fortunately someone had a camera handy to record the great Govans Celebration of 1909. The parade down York Road featured no top-down convertibles but rather stately horses, which undoubtedly preferred the unpaved highway. Flags and bunting decorated the dais, and everyone wore a hat!
For many years switchboard operators — mostly women — made connections manually. Sometimes several were needed to complete a long-distance call. Note the supervisor hovering to take charge if difficulties occurred. Equipment like this may be seen in the Baltimore Museum of Industry.

**What Goes On Here?**

One of Govans' oldest-established "businesses" is the C&P Telephone building at 5711 York Road. At times many people are seen entering and leaving, but it is closed to the public and remains a place of mystery to most Govans dwellers. What goes on in there?

Since the late 1950s, this large brick edifice has been a Central Office used for a variety of purposes. It began as an accounting center, was used as a marketing and business office in the sixties, and in the eighties has been used exclusively as a business office handling residential accounts. Some 175 staff members are employed there.

When a resident calls to request telephone service or a change in service, chances are he will speak to a service representative located in the Govans building. These employees — mostly women — sit at computer terminals which display all the relevant information. Very little paperwork is evident. When a request for service is made, information is entered on the computer keyboard and transmitted automatically to the departments that handle phone installation and accounting. Service representatives are trained to be helpful and accurate and never lose their cool when dealing with difficult customers. They get many compliments on their friendly manner and the thoroughness with which they follow through on service problems.

At one time C&P buildings housed a large number of phone operators who personally routed every phone call to its destination. In the 1940s and 1950s dialphones and mechanical switching eliminated most of the manual operators, but the switching equipment still occupied a lot of space. Beginning in the 1960s, electronic switching greatly reduced the space needed to house a "telephone exchange," and today's computer-style equipment takes up very little room.

All businesses today focus on keeping labor costs down, and C&P is no exception. Electronic switching saves C&P customers money — and computer terminals make possible better, more personal service. But there was no way telephone companies could avoid the cost of installing and repairing telephones. It costs more to send out a repairman than the company bills the customer — even so, most customers find service bills excessive. To make matters worse, today many phone troubles are caused by the cheap digital phones flooding the market, for which the phone company is not responsible, so a repairman has no C&P equipment he can repair or replace. He can only tell the customer the problem is not C&P's — which doesn't improve customer relations when the service bill comes in.

In consequence, C&P has tried to educate consumers to check out their own phones before calling for service. Today it costs less to buy a new digital phone than pay a service fee. However, when a repairman is called in and discovers a phone malfunction, he is able to lend the customer a loaner-phone until the broken unit can be replaced.

Telephone service is constantly being improved, and more changes are in store for the future. Video-phones are just around the corner. If you call in to ask about one of the new "call waiting," call forwarding," or other services, chances are you'll be speaking to someone at the C&P building on York Road.

(C&P is now Bell Atlantic.)
Church and Community

A community is not just a collection of homes in a neighborhood. A community communicates, gets together to discuss and solve problems, organizes. It has community leaders who influence people and get things done.

Little is known about community life in early Govanstown. Matters of local interest may have been discussed at the inn over a glass of ale. But the big decisions were made by the big landowners — to buy or sell land, to build homes, to purchase livestock or slaves, to engage servants and laborers, and so on. The other villagers minded their stores and their own business and didn't get involved in the affairs of their betters.

But with the founding of churches in Govans, a new level of social organization appeared. The churches were not only places of worship, but also centers of social organization. Older residents tell us how important church was to them when they were growing up — not only the Sunday services, but the social clubs, the schools, the scout troops, the fairs and fetes, the charity drives, and so on. The other villagers minded their stores and their own business and didn't get involved in the affairs of their betters.

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The churches have given continuity to Govans history just as they have given continuity to their parishioners. They celebrate and record the rites of passage: births, marriages, deaths. They bring people together to share the rituals of their faith and to give each other mutual support.

But at the same time churches bring people together, they also separate them according to denominations: Christians and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Episcopalians and Lutherans, Baptists and Methodists — each with its history of struggle and persecution going back to bad old days in some Old Country. Yet in Maryland, the Free State, religious tolerance has always been protected (if one was not a Jew!), and live and let live was practiced with little cause to stir up old animosities. Govans' first church, now Govans Presbyterian, was a "Union" chapel that was used by different denominations, just as the adjacent Govans cemetery was used as a communal burial ground.

In recent years the Govans churches have worked together to address a variety of social problems, led by the Govans Ministerium, or council of ministers. This council pioneered Epiphany House senior residence and Ascension Homes, sheltered housing for de-institutionalized psychiatric patients.

Churches are both organizations and physical structures, of course, and church structures were often by far the most impressive buildings in the community. Every Govans church has an interesting history of growth and expansion, aspirations usually limited by financial restraints. Each has its own written history, recorded in more detail than is possible here.

By contrast with the churches, which are still as active as before, the eighteenth and nine-
Rituals and ceremonies are at the heart of religious institutions. This procession at St. Mary's School dates from the early 1970s, and is one of the many illustrations in the St Mary's 125th Anniversary booklet, a valuable source of Govans history. Girl Scouts, priests, boys and girls are all dressed in distinctive uniforms befitting the solemn event.

teenth century saw the rise of a variety of Masonic lodges, very few of which survive today. They were all-male institutions, social and philanthropic in nature, often practicing some form of secret ritual honoring a distinguished hierarchy of elders. Govans had its Eagles, its Odd Fellows, its Knights of Columbus ... and of course its political clubs.

The Neighborhood Improvement Club of Govans was a women's organization founded in 1900. It history is recorded in Govans Branch Library — appropriately, since the library was founded as a Club initiative.

Business organizations are said to have existed in Govanstown, but no trace remains of them. But it is clear today's Govanstowne Business Association had many predecessors. From the beginning Homeland as a private housing development had its residents' association, and other neighborhood organizations sprang up in the nineteen sixties.

But apart from these organizations, Govans village exists only as a rather vague memory. Residents of Homeland to the west and Chinquapin to the east don't consider themselves to be part of it. It has no marked boundaries or civic structure, and in many ways its parts are greater than its whole. Each community organization, for instance, is more significant to its members than the York Road Council (previously called the Community Council of Govans), the umbrella organization that serves as a clearinghouse and coordinating agency. This is because neighborhood issues are very local — problems with zoning, rats, crime, street maintenance, and so on — and alternate between crisis and inactivity.

In general, neighborhood association meetings are poorly attended unless some threat assails the community — a commercial developer wants to move in on residential property, for instance, or a rash of burglaries occurs. After the crisis is past, inactivity resumes. Neighborhood associations rarely attempt any positive changes; most folks just want to be left alone, and in any event no one wants to pay for improvements, even if they can be agreed upon. Most members see their function as preserving things the way they are and resisting any change that might lower property values.

What neighborhood organizations do best is complain to the authorities — City Hall, the Police, the Sanitation Department — when tax-supported services are regarded as ineffective. Although many are billed as "improvement" associations, their main function is to resist decline — which is not necessarily a negative role.
Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter

In 1911 the Rev. John F. Crigler, pastor of St. Paul's, Lutherville, made a survey of the need for a Lutheran Church in Govans. Area Lutherans were invited to a meeting at Parr's Hall, which attracted forty persons. A second meeting added twenty more to the list.

On this foundation a Sunday school was instituted and a congregation organized as the First Lutheran Church of Govans, with Rev. Crigler as missionary pastor. In 1912 a lot at York Road and Harwood Avenue was purchased for $5,000 and in 1914 the Church Council was authorized to build a church. Ground was broken on May 26, 1914 and the structure completed by November 8 of that year, when the church was dedicated. The two-story building cost $17,000.

In 1918 the church name was changed to "Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter." In 1919 work began on a parsonage, which was completed in 1920. An annex to house a kitchen and a bible and primary school followed in 1921, and the congregation became self-supporting in 1923. A larger bible school building was added in 1931.

The Silver Jubilee booklet published in 1937 shows a drawing of a church "when completed" with a substantial bell tower at the northeast corner.

On February 3, 1955, while fuel oil was being pumped into the basement, an explosion and fire occurred which badly damaged the nave. The big decision made at that time was to rebuild on the same site, rather than move further out into the suburbs. Although the congregation elected to remain in Govans, this debate indicates how many parishioners must have been gravitating north as the city expanded and its populations shifted. A new church was completed and dedicated on April 29, 1956 — without a bell tower.

Holy Comforter elects its pastors, and the congregation has always played a major role in administering church activities. In addition to the Church Council and Bible School, its organizations include a Ladies' Guild, Women's and Young Women's Missionary Societies, a Junior Ladies' Guild, a Brotherhood, Lutheran League, Light Brigade, and Junior and Senior Choirs. Together they encompass a wide range of religious, educational, artistic, and social activities very typical of church life in Govans.
Pleasant Hope Baptist Church

Pleasant Hope Baptist Church, 430 East Belvedere Avenue, was dedicated in 1978, but its roots are in the nineteenth century. In 1894 Isaac and Jane Gassaway and a small band of worshipers formed the first African-American church in the Govanstown area, meeting at their home, 511 Woodbourne Avenue. Later they moved to Glenwood Avenue and named their church Mount Pleasant Baptist. Soon after, another group led by the Rev. A. Lindsay organized Good Hope Mission at 427 Hutchins Avenue, which became the Good Hope Church of Govanstown in 1901. These two congregations enjoyed a warm fellowship, and in 1933 united to form Pleasant Hope Baptist Church with George Pinkney Cunningham as pastor.

In 1963 the Rev. Howard R. Queen became pastor and embarked on a program of revitalization. He organized a youth fellowship, a youth choir, and a mission program. Miss Rosetta Davis was appointed Director of Christian Education and pioneered the Vacation Bible School. Men's and women's choruses were also formed.

These expanded programs created the need for a new larger church, and in 1972 a building fund was launched. By 1977 $60,000 had been raised, and with the help of the York Road Planning Area Committee, a mortgage for $130,000 was secured.

In 1977 the old church was demolished and the congregation found a temporary home in the Senator Theatre. Then, on October 29, 1978, Rev. Queen and church elders led a procession to the new church on Belvedere Avenue, which was dedicated by the Rev. Matthew Silver, pastor of Concord Baptist Church. The keys of the new church were ceremonially presented by Frank Knott, president of Knott Construction Co., the builder, who was also Chairman of YorPAC.

The new church thrived, and ten years later, in 1988, the $130,000 mortgage was paid off in full. The result of many years of planning and dedication on the part of its congregation, Pleasant Hope Baptist Church is also a monument to community cooperation and a focus for community activities.
Govans Boundary United Methodist Church

Govans Boundary United Methodist Parish was formed in 1982 when Boundary United Methodist Church on 42nd Street in Waverly merged with Govans United Methodist Church. Both now occupy the church at 5210 York Road, and the Waverly church was purchased by the Presbyterian Faith Christian Fellowship. The present congregation thus has two histories.

Govans United Methodist Church dates from 1903, but its roots go back to Evans Log Meeting House, built on what is now Roland Avenue in 1770.

Methodism came to Maryland in the late 1760s, when Robert Shawbridge, a follower of the Wesley brothers, formed a Methodist society which met in the home of Daniel Evans. Evans' house was located on the east side of what is now Roland Avenue between Wyndhurst and Belvedere Avenues. In 1770 a log meeting house was constructed on the west side of the road south of the Evans house. It had simple benches, not pews, and was heated by a tin stove in the center. Many famous methodist preachers belonged to this society, including Richard Owens, the first American-born Methodist preacher.

In 1823 the log meeting house was replaced by Evans Chapel, a stone building with a gallery for slaves. The chapel was well supported by a prosperous congregation; it had real pews and a recessed pulpit. However, in 1850 it was abandoned in favor of a new brick church built on land donated by James Bryan off the York Road in Govans. All these early Methodist meeting houses (the founders rejected the word "church") were served by circuit riders who preached at several locations.

In 1869 the Govans congregation requested meeting house became a "station." As the Govans population increased during the late 1800s, the Methodist congregation outgrew its little brick church, and the present stone church was constructed in 1903. A Sunday school was added in 1911 and another room in 1916. The church was remodeled in 1959 and a new organ installed.

The Boundary Methodist Church congregation dates from 1891, when a cottage prayer meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Stagner, who lived on New Boundary Avenue in Upper Waverly/Lower Govans. Out of this meeting grew a mission Sunday school and a tent meeting during the summer. Funds were requested from the Mother Church at Waverly to build a permanent chapel, and this was completed in 1911. But by 1914 this new church was already outgrown, and an addition was dedicated in 1916. A parsonage was purchased for $20,000 in 1947. The post-war years saw many improvements, but by the time the church's seventy-fifth anniversary was celebrated in 1968, its economic base was already starting to decline. The Lower Govans area was in transition, and many parishioners were moving out to the suburbs.

By 1980 the parish was facing a crisis. Its pastor left and funds would not stretch to engaging another. For awhile the parish experimented with an associate pastor attached to Govans United Methodist Church, but by 1982 the reality had to be faced that Boundary could not survive by itself. So the remaining parishioners made the "heart-breaking decision," to sell their church and merge with their neighbor parish to the north. Today the combined congregations are integrated and number over 300 members.
Govans Methodist Church, 1850-1903

Stoutly Romanesque, Govans United Methodist Church dates from 1903, remodeled in 1959.
The Church that Moved... and Moved

Few churches have such an interesting history as the Church of the Nativity, Cedarcroft.

The original structure was built as a private chapel in Western Maryland, near Bayard, West Virginia in 1889. It was then called Emmanuel Chapel and was constructed as a monument to Comptroller of the Treasury James W McCulloh by his daughter, Anne Brown. At first it served the loggers working on or near the McCulloh estate, but they moved on and the chapel found little use.

In 1911 the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland purchased land along York Road to establish a mission parish. At first the mission, led by The Rev. Charles A. Hensel, Rector of the Church of the Redeemer, met in the Neighborhood Improvement Club of Govans and other locations. But when the McCulloh family offered their chapel to the Bishop in 1893, he in turn offered it to Nativity, which accepted it. The building was carefully dismantled and shipped on flatbed railroad cars to the Lake Avenue crossing and thence by wagon to the new site.

In its new location the plain chapel was considerably modified. The tower was enlarged, the nave widened, the roof raised. Tie beams were added to support a new slate roof. It external appearance was transformed by the addition of stucco to the walls along with dark half-timbers, which made it look more 16th century English than 19th century American. The furnishings were donated by other parishes.

In 1921 a new priest-in-charge was appointed who had rather grand ideas for Nativity's development. A new parish house was to be contracted, the existing church would be moved once again to the end of the lot, and eventually a new gothic revival stone church constructed to match the parish house. The parish house was built - including public bowling alleys to provide income for the development - and the church was moved to its present location at the East end of the lot. The bowling alleys produced less income than anticipated, and soon the Depression wiped out any hope of completing the project.

The 1913 move did not include the great bell which hung in the original bell tower, and in 1941 the 1,000 pound bell was brought from Glencoe, where it had been stored by the McCullohs, and hung in the tower once again.

After the Second World War, in 1953, an architect was engaged to design a new stone church costing $80,000, but again these plans proved overambitious. The money was not forthcoming, so plans were changed to enlarge the wooden church, and this was done. The seating capacity was doubled, stained glass was added, and the entrance was moved to the north end.

A picture of the never-built church hangs in the parish house library. It shows a charming picture-postcard village church at home in the Cotswolds but hardly in Baltimore. Today we can be thankful that Nativity's authentic wooden church was not sacrificed to build yet another medieval imitation. As Todd Shelton, a student of architectural history at Loyala College, wrote in a paper on Nativity, the present church is an example of "work with what you've got" architecture — a functional hand-me-down style that has been fixed up many times, always a little better, and now looks pretty good.

Let's hope Nativity is here to stay!
Emmanuel Chapel in 1889

Nativity Chapel in 1915

Nativity Church today
The Church of St. Mary

Though medieval in appearance, the Church of St. Mary dates only from 1942, but is the culmination of many years of development going back to 1847.

St. Mary's parish had its origin in the great Irish Potato Famine of that year, which forced many thousands of Irish to leave their starving homeland and seek a new life in the New World. Many were poor and in ill-health, and some did not survive the long sea voyage. It was not uncommon for children to lose both parents and arrive as orphans on this strange shore. Fortunately they found a friend in "Good Father Dolan," pastor of St. Patrick's Church at the foot of Broadway, who established St. Patrick's orphanage for girls at Fells Point and soon after an orphanage for boys west of Govanstown. Run by the Brothers of St. Patrick, the orphanage was near where Charles Street and Wyndhurst Avenue intersect today. It was in the chapel of this orphanage that mass was celebrated and the parish of St. Mary had its beginning.

There were no other Catholic parishes nearby, and masses at the orphanage were well attended. As a result, construction of a "little wooden church" was begun in 1849, off Notre Dame Lane (today Homeland Avenue runs behind the site). The church opened in 1850 with a tremendous fanfare, thousands of Baltimore area Catholics flocking to Govanstown to attend the dedication. A large contingent formed up at the Battle Monument downtown and marched the four and one half miles carrying flags and banners, and the opening oration lasted two hours.

Misfortune early plagued the little church. The first pastor, the Rev. Joseph J. Maguire, was carried off by pneumonia in 1852 at the age of only thirty-five. Then, three years later, in 1855, the church burned to the ground, and the pastor's residence was saved only by throwing great quantities of snow on it. The building was insured for $1,800, and with this money a new brick church was built that endured until the present church replaced it in 1942. The first congregation numbered about 500, mostly of Irish descent, but including some German Catholics from Potsdam and Oldenburg.

Old St. Mary's cemetery, off Homeland Avenue, contains the graves of many of these early parishioners. Grave markers show as many as six generations of one family and list birthplaces in all but three of the counties of Ireland. The old stones also record the pathos of death in early childhood, one mother losing five children in as many years.

St. Mary's parish itself "mothered" several mission churches — at Hampden, Mt. Washington, and Texas — and these depleted its own congregation. By 1891 it was reduced to 340 souls. But the growth of Govans as a suburban development after the turn of the century introduced new population which swelled the congregation to the point where a larger church was needed. Land was purchased for a new church in 1924 — part of the Homeland estate — but construction was delayed during the Great Depression. The coming of the Second World War ended those hard times, and a new stone church was constructed in 1942. The first mass was celebrated in the new church as the last mass was celebrated in the old as a token of continuity.

St. Mary's School was founded in 1874. A two-classroom frame building, it survived almost
eighty years until a new school was built beside the new church in 1952. Throughout its history St. Mary's School has been staffed by the Sisters of Notre Dame, who came from Europe in 1847 and founded the college on Charles Street. Attendance at the school followed the same pattern as the church. By 1949 the original little school had 1,400 students enrolled, and several grades were taught in shifts. But the crowding was eased when other parochial schools were opened to the north and east, and by the construction of the new larger school we know today, which currently has some 230 students enrolled.

St. Mary's is a model of a church as a social community, bringing together worship, fellowship, education, and social programs. The integrity of this community-within-a-community is reflected in the architecture of the church, church hall, rectory, and school, all clustered around a close and unified by the same harmonious style.

*Right: Old St. Mary's, which opened in 1850, only to burn down in 1855.*

*Bellow: The present St. Mary's opened in 1942, after a long delay resulting from the Depression.*
Govans Presbyterian Church

With its sturdy square tower, Govans Presbyterian Church could be any small English village church dating from late Saxon or early Norman times. In fact, it is a fine example of American Gothic revival architecture, designed by one of Baltimore's leading architects, Robert Carey Long, and its "medieval" tower is even "more recent, dating from 1906, when the original church was extensively remodeled.

Govans Presbyterian can claim to be Govans' oldest church, however. When the original idea for a "union chapel" was conceived, Govanstown was a community of around 200, many of whom traveled to Epsom Chapel in Towson to worship. A Sunday School was started in 1840, and soon after plans for a chapel were underway, a joint effort of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists. The list of original contributors included Johns Hopkins, who was a Quaker abolitionist. The lot on which the chapel was constructed was donated by Mrs. Mary Woodward Howard, a descendant of William Govane, and the cemetery land was purchased by Miss Ann Turnbull. Construction began in 1844, and the chapel was completed in 1846. The Rev. John Heacock was the first pastor. Soon after, a manse for the pastor was built which included a church school.

The Rev. R.C. Galbraith was pastor during the turbulent Civil War years, when Maryland, a border state, was bitterly divided between North and South. The church was an oasis of calm and offered prayers for peace and forgiveness. It is recorded that Rev. Galbraith visited Hampton Mansion on Saturdays to lead church services for the slaves.

In 1887 the old manse/schoolhouse was torn down and a new manse constructed, the school no longer being in use. In 1904 the congregation celebrated the church's 60th anniversary, and in response to a growing congregation embarked on a remodeling project. A handsome bell tower was added to replace the old spire, and a Tiffany window was installed. Remodeling was completed in 1906. The church was again enlarged in 1951, and the education building was added in 1958 to house the nursery school.

The popular adult education classes were started in 1969, a time when Govans was in transition. Another landmark was the appointment of Govans Presbyterian's first woman assistant pastor in 1983.

Under the guidance of Pastor John R. Sharp, Govans Presbyterian has reemerged as a leader of the ecumenical movement in Govans, spearheading a series of social initiatives in association with the Govans Council of Churches representing the original union Protestant group augmented by Pleasant Hope Baptist and St. Mary's Catholic Churches. Ecumenical leadership is a Govans Presbyterian tradition that has served the community well for over 150 years.

In 1988 the remains of members of the Govane family, removed from the Drumquhasle Cemetery when Drumcastle shopping center was under construction and interred somewhere in Greenmount cemetery, were discovered and brought back to rest in the original Govanstown cemetery.
Govans Presbyterian Church, the neighborhood’s oldest, was completed in 1846.

The square clock tower, which still chimes out the hours over Govans today, dates from 1906.
Gregory Memorial Baptist Church

Originally Govanstown Baptist Church, Gregory Memorial was renamed after Dr. Oliver Fuller Gregory, four years after this energetic minister became its pastor in 1912. But Dr. Gregory was in fact the tenth pastor of Govanstown Baptist church, and its origins go back twenty-two years before his time.

The church had its beginnings on June 7, 1890 as a mission Sunday school sponsored by Huntingdon Baptist Church. It is traditional in the Baptist communion to pioneer development in a new community by establishing a Sunday school, and that happened in Govanstown.

Thirty-two names are on the first roll of those attending the new school, which met in a private home. The mission prospered, and within five years the group erected its own house of worship, a frame chapel 24 feet by 40 feet that cost $925 to build.

On May 2, 1897 the congregation organized as Govanstown Baptist Church with thirteen charter members and Brother William Leonhardt as founder-pastor. A succession of pastors followed as the congregation grew, but it was not until 1912 that the church was galvanized by the leadership of Oliver Gregory, who so impressed his congregation that in 1917 they voted to name their church after him — a most extraordinary honor.

Unfortunately Pastor Gregory died shortly after, in 1919, to the intense distress of his congregation. Two weeks after his untimely demise, the Rev. W.H. Brannock, who had recently been appointed State Evangelist of the Baptist Church in Maryland, was invited to Govans to console and encourage the saddened congregation. A fine speaker, Dr. Brannock added 23 new members to the church during his month of evangelistic services, and in March was surprised to be offered the vacant pastorship "unanimously and enthusiastically" by the entire congregation.

Dr. Brannock accepted and immediately embarked on building a more substantial church. On September 6, 1919 the cornerstone of the present church was laid in a ceremony conducted by the Tuscan Lodge of Govanstown. Eight hundred dollars was raised during this service for the church building fund. The new church was completed in 1922. Dr. Brannock retired in 1956 after 37 years as pastor of Gregory Memorial.

In 1926 a program of "pilgrimages" was initiated by George Reed, leader of the adult men's bible class. Members visited other churches in Maryland to enjoy fellowship and worship together. This became an annual event.

In the 1940s momentum grew to build a new educational building and funds were actively solicited for this purpose. A 1950 issue of the church's "Messenger" newsletter urged readers to redouble their contributions. The present educational building is the outcome.

Gregory Memorial Baptist Church is basically a stone Gothic Revival structure, with a square bell tower (added in 1961) but no steeple. Though influenced by the prevailing style, it is deliberately plain. The west window is uncompromisingly square; others are circular or have pointed arches. The covered arcade linking the church and the educational building has three Romanesque arches and creates a pleasant enclosed space similar to that of St. Mary's across York Road.

But architecture is not what is most important about Gregory Memorial. The church's motto is "Where you are a stranger but once," and it is this spirit that permeates the entire structure.
The little chapel which was the first home of Govans Baptist congregation still stands on Lyman Avenue. The present stone church was completed in 1922.
The Neighborhood Club of Govans was founded by Miss Clara Benninghouse and friends, seen here in this 1900 photo, taken in the garden of The Anchorage, the Benninghouse estate, at the end of what is now Harwood Avenue.

The Woman's Club of Govans

Apart from its churches, probably no institution had more influence on community life in Govanstown during the early twentieth century than the Woman's Club of Govans. Govans in 1900 was an affluent suburb of spacious individual homes, its menfolk prominently engaged in business activities and their wives in social activities that also enriched their lives and engaged their energies. Some were indeed highly regarded teachers, but most were not employed. Today these women would be working managers and professionals; in those days wives often devoted themselves to social and cultural organizations.

Mrs. Benjamin W. Corkran and Miss Clara B. Benninghaus were the moving spirits that inspired the Neighborhood Club of Govans, later called the Woman's Club of Govans. On September 7, 1900 they brought together twenty-one women to discuss formation of such an organization. A constitution was drawn up, and a month later the Club was instituted "to make Govanstown a more beautiful, healthful, and cultural community in which to live."

Their first priority was neighborhood improvement, and to this end they worked to create a new garbage collection system and improve sidewalks and streets, lighting and water supply, fire protection, and schools. The group had departments of Civics, Legislation, Literature, Art, Drama, Music, and Public Welfare, and organized a chorus and a library. They made philanthropic grants-in-aid to good causes around the City and sold War Bonds as part of their patriotic effort. Books, magazines, razor blades, playing cards and other gifts were sent to servicemen fighting overseas. A World War II bomber was even named after the Woman's Club of Govans! They held card parties, played bingo, and sold cookbooks to raise money.

But the most enduring contribution the Woman's Club made to the Govans community was to found and nurture a library. The idea for a library in Govans was discussed as early as 1903, when $50 was collected for this purpose. Books were solicited, and the first collection was housed in the home of Mrs. Jane Bell on Bellona Avenue. By 1914 some 1,000 books had been acquired, and the collection was moved to the YMCA building on Harwood Road.

In 1919 E. Glenn Perine, the master of Homeland, gave a plot of land off Bellona Avenue for the construction of an Enoch Pratt Free Library Branch. The new library (#22) was opened on September 13, 1921, and Mr. Perine, who was then 96 years old, received the first library card. There were 2,557 volumes on the shelves when the library opened. Mrs. Arthur H. Kelly, president of the Woman's Club, officiated at the opening, and Mrs. C. Albert Kuyper, the Club's Library Chairman, wrote in her report: "There was a rare good fellowship of feeling on that early day in autumn, for it means the nearest approach to a community house that Govans has had."

The Club presented the library with an American flag, "to greet each and every one as they
This photo, from the collection of Mrs. Dorothy Earp, is titled "Govanstown's First Garbage Collector." The young lad looks less experienced than the venerable horse. The caked mud on the cart's wheels witness to the deep mud which was part of rural life before paved highways.

enter," and later provided the library with draperies for the stage, a piano, coat racks, and other furniture. The first librarian was Miss Margaret Janney, who served from 1921 until 1937.

Several Woman's Club of Govans members were prominent in the Federation of Women's Clubs, but in 1984 the WCG president regretfully submitted a letter of resignation, "motivated by a realization of changing times and community needs and a dwindling membership." The great age of women's clubs was passing away, and few now remain. They cherished high ideals and worked tirelessly to put them into action. Today's ideal of womanhood is different, and few women today have the time to devote to volunteer activities. The personal name's of most WCG members do not appear in the records; they always used "Mrs." plus their husband's first name. Today many modern women are more concerned to succeed in what was once "a man's world." But the achievements of women in philanthropic social and cultural organizations, and their leading role in the great movements of the nineteenth century, should never be ignored or forgotten.

The role of women in the antislavery movement, in the temperance movement, in the labor movement, in the Red Cross, as well as in the women's suffrage movement, was crucial to their success. These moral crusades spearheaded legislation in Congress and resulted not only in new laws but also in amendments to the U.S. Constitution. At the community level, women have also spearheaded local initiatives throughout the twentieth century. However, these dynamic women's clubs and social and cultural auxiliaries are fast dying out. They leave a big gap and will be sorely missed.
Top: Govans Mayor's Station staff Madeleine Cooper and Christine Tucker are honored by a group including (left to right) Father Joseph T. DePetris, City Councilmen Jody Landers and Bill Cunningham, CCG president Sam Jett, and GBA president Morton Spector. Above, Left: Yorky, the Yorkshire terrier mascot of the York Road Area Planning Committee. Above, Right: The New York Road signs were added to street signs the length of the YRPAC corridor. Right: Epiphany House staff and Board Chairman Jack Sharp are presented with a Christmas wreath by GBA Corridor Manager Judy Kapfhammer.
Four Govans Organizations

The twentieth century has been remarkable for two developments, one spectacular, the other quiet and taken for granted. The more glamorous is of course the rise of science and technology, which has taken us from the first powered flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903 to space shuttles and inter-continental air travel almost everyone can afford. Less spectacular has been the proliferation of organizations — government agencies, corporations, charities. The two developments are linked by developments in communication and information processing, without which space shuttles and supermarkets alike could not function.

During most of Govanstown's history, the fastest mode of transportation was the horse. Horse-drawn transportation created the York Road, and that route was followed by the first streetcars in the 1860s. Those streetcars made possible the development of Govanstown from village to suburb by shortening the time needed to get to and from Baltimore City. The real difference between a town and suburb is that most of a town's residents also work there, while most of a suburb's don't. Suburbs are by definition dormitory satellites where those employed in the city choose to live away from the congestion — and the more affluent they are, the larger and further away are their homes.

The suburban pattern of living was made possible by improvements in transportation. But the streetcar was followed by the automobile, which added a new fluidity to city life and changed the nature of the suburbs. No longer did homes cluster within walking distance of the streetcar lines, but fanned out over the countryside. It was easy to live in one place and work in another, not only downtown where the streetcar tracks ran, but across town and twenty or thirty miles away. Today people commute to Baltimore from beyond the Pennsylvania line.

Soon after the introduction of the mass-produced automobile, Govans was no longer considered a suburb at all but part of the city, and the new suburbs moved on out to Towson, Timonium, Cockeysville, and beyond.

Today, some employees don't even have to commute at all; they can communicate with their offices by modem and fax and phone and go about their business while communing with nature. For many years now Govans residents have been able to talk to anyone around the world by telephone. And radio and television made all Americans equally in touch with the news networks and popular entertainment wherever they happened to live. Within the scope of little more than half a century, we grew from an actual village to become part of a "global village," to use Marshall McLuhan's term.

Old St. Mary's churchyard on Homeland Avenue is filled with the graves of the Irish who came to Govans following the great potato famine in the 1840s. In those days immigrants left the old country for good, never to return. Today they can hop a plane and be back with the old folks in a few hours — and talk about the same television series.

Meanwhile, the growth of organizations has continued apace. The first large organizations were the church denominations, with their "branch offices" in most communities. They were followed by the military and other government agencies, then by corporations like railroads, banks, and utility companies.

Today Govans residents pay most of their bills not to local merchants but to credit card companies located in distant cities; the local compo-
nent is shrinking, while the national and international components are growing. Today businesspeople in the Greater Baltimore area are told they should "think global" and relate to Western Europe and Eastern Europe and the world economy.

But that doesn't mean that local affairs are of no consequence. For most Govans dwellers and businesspeople, local affairs still predominate. But here too new organizations have grown up, four in the last fifteen years or so, all with plans, programs, staff, meetings, newsletters. It's easy not to see how novel and innovative they are, because to us they seem ordinary, but they wouldn't have seemed ordinary to earlier Govans-dwellers. They include the Community Council of Govans (later York Road Council), The York Road Planning Area Committee (later York Road Development), The Churches of the Greater Govans Community (formerly the Govans Ministerium, now GEDCO), and the Govanstowne Business Association. They're worth examining in detail.

The Churches of the Greater Govans Community

When Pastor John R. Sharp came to Govans Presbyterian church in 1977, he already had in mind the blueprint that was to become Churches of the Greater Govans Community (CGGC). For, during the nine years he had served as pastor of Kilburn Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey, Dr. Sharp developed a model of ecumenical interdenominational co-operation on social issues that could easily be adapted to the Govans community.

So, soon after arriving at his new parish on York Road, Jack Sharp set about mobilizing his colleagues of the Govans ministerium to experiment with ecumenism and social activism. As "the new kid on the block," this needed some pretty powerful Chutzpah, but the Lord's work was to be done, and Jack reached for the telephone and began calling around. Five of the seven churches responded positively (the others joined in later), and before long they had agreed on a program of interdenominational cooperation that had both religious and social dimensions.

The religious component included a joint worship service on Good Friday and other festivals and an exchange of pulpits once a year, which continues to this day. The social component initiated what has become an ongoing series of innovative social programs to address the needs of youth, the sick, the elderly, the mentally handicapped, the homeless, and others. CGGCs mode of operating has not been to build a conglomerate of social services, but rather to spearhead each project and introduce it to the community, then spin it off as an autonomous, self-sustaining entity. In this way the ministers are not swamped by increasing social service responsibilities, but can retain their role as religious leaders concerned to apply their faith to good works in a very practical way.

This integration of faith and works is close to the heart of Jack Sharp's philosophy, and today he is much in demand as a speaker on church cooperation. It's a philosophy centered in ecumenism, the belief that neighborly co-operation between the churches is more in tune with the Christian message than wrangling over theological differences. Its emphasis on joint projects that bring congregations together works not only as a social dynamic that gets needed jobs done, but also as a model of religion-in-action that impresses believers and unbelievers alike. It is, if you like, good PR for religion itself.

For the reality of religion in America to-
Above: Mayor Kurt Schmoke is televised making an address at the opening of the first of the Ascension Homes. Below: Representatives of the Govans Council of Ministers and supporters gather for a photo op outside the soon-to-be-completed Epiphany House Senior Residence.
day, is that fewer people are supporters of institutional religion — though many still say they believe in God. It consequently makes sense for the denominations and individual churches to join together in persuading the uncommitted than to attack each other's theological positions and attempt to lure away each others' congregations. Virtually no Govans parishioners have moved from one church to another as a result of their ecumenical cooperation, but a number of previously unaffiliated persons have joined.

The first social program undertaken by CGGC was a Summer Skills Job Bank to help local youth find summer jobs with local businesses. From the beginning it was a cooperative effort with Sharon Whelan, a City youth program administrator, and Madeleine Cooper, Mayor Schaefer's representative in Govans and also a leader of the Community Council. It operated out of the newly enlarged Govans Multipurpose Center. Other CGGC programs for youth included an Ecumenical Vacation Summer School and a Summer Day Camp, the first religious, the second secular.

CGGC also offered assistance to St. Luke's Health Center, a holistic medicine project that attempted to bring together physical and spiritual healing through meditation and health-mindedness. A product of the sensitive seventies, St. Luke's was active from 1980 to 1985, when it succumbed to the hard-nosed Yuppy ethos and cost-cutting of the Reagan years. It was directed by Kenneth Baaken assisted by Sister Frances Cavy.

The next CGGC project was of a different order of magnitude: Epiphany House Senior Residence. All churches today have aging congregations, and the number of aged in the population is increasing. The Govans ministers were aware that a need existed for relatively inexpensive "domiciliary care" for seniors who were perhaps not strong enough to manage their own homes, but not sick enough to require nursing home care. Senior retirement communities such as Edenwald and Fairhaven provide elegant living for those who can afford the considerable up-front investment and ongoing costs, but are out of reach for many seniors of modest means. Epiphany House was intended to provide pleasant accommodations for some thirty-three elderly people.

After exploring the cost of building a new senior residence, the ministers examined the possibility of remodeling the run-down Donald Apartments, which had formerly been the Govans Hotel, a historic monument. The concept was supported by Dr. Matthew Tayback, State Commissioner for the Aging, and by the Community Council of Govans. The proposal was decided when Stephen Joy, a consultant experienced in securing grants for such purposes, reported that government funding for the project, plus some private investment, would make it possible.

The decision to go ahead was made on January 6, 1981 — the Feast of the Epiphany — and the reconstruction took four years. It was dedicated by Mayor Schaefer in 1984. Today Epiphany House has enlisted the help of 125 volunteers and is financially secure, but its path has not always been smooth. Soon after opening its doors the management found that the well-elderly prefer to stay on in their own homes until some health crisis makes supervised care a necessity. Consequently Epiphany House residents tended to need more medical support and supervision than had been anticipated. One result was higher costs, another was that the residence became perceived as a home for the ailing, which deterred the well-elderly. Turnover was higher than planned, as the older, frailest residents died or were transferred to nursing homes, which created frequent vacancies. However, in time Epiphany house adapted by changing its mission and providing more healthcare services, and began contemplating a much larger residence for the well-elderly, for which the present home serves as a health care adjunct.

Epiphany House advertised that its facilities were accessible to the handicapped, and several ministers received inquiries from parishioners about care for the mentally handicapped, which the residence couldn't handle. It was out of these inquiries that CGGC's next project evolved: Ascension Homes. Unlike Epiphany house, Ascension Homes was conceived not as a centralized facility but as a number of individual homes where those with benign handicaps could live together under supervision. Once again, consultant Stephen Joy encouraged the project and identified funding for 20 or more residents. Three individual
homes were thus planned for seven, seven, and six residents.

Introducing a home for psychiatric patients into the community is a difficult proceeding, often frustrated by the opposition of residents who fear child molestation and a decline in property values. It's called the NIMBY response, for "Not In My Back Yard." CGGC's mode of introducing Ascension Homes to the community was a model of enlightened public relations. First, the ministers talked to their congregations about the needs of some of their own parishioners. Then they approached area neighborhood associations and umbrella groups, the CCG, YRPAC, and NECO (Northeast Community Organization). Their method was not to find a suitable home and then try to persuade neighbors to accept it, but rather to ask each community association whether they supported the concept and, if so, which houses might be suitable. Most communities know of a run-down, abandoned, eyesore house which has stood empty long enough for neighbors to welcome any kind of renovation. By this means, three homes were provisionally selected. But before reconstruction could begin, neighbors were invited to community meetings to air their concerns. These meetings, co-sponsored by CCG and YRPAC, did elicit some community anxieties, but CGGC was able to allay them by promising that dangerous mental patients would be screened out and the ministers would take responsibility for the conduct of the program. By this succession of steps the hearts and minds of the community were won over by religious leaders who had trust and credibility, and thus far the three Ascension Homes have operated quietly in their neighborhoods without incident.

A short while after the Ascension Homes opened without incident in Govans, a similar project in Rodgers Forge a few miles north along York Road was met with furious community resistance and had to be abandoned.

The Churches of the Greater Govans Community could be the churches of any community — and include synagogues and other faiths as well. The Govans model is innovative and successful, not only in what it has done for the community, but also in what it has done for the churches themselves. Together, they attest that the Good Samaritan is alive and well today and living in Govans — and that's something all our churches can be proud of.
In 1969 a six-page questionnaire was compiled by an ecumenical committee and distributed to area residents. Their response surprised everyone. It revealed that most people were not overly concerned about racial change, but were concerned about the deterioration of York Road and its amenities. The survey had two outcomes: a "Socialization Program" of block parties, bull roasts, and other social events aimed at getting neighbors to know one another and welcome new residents; and a new interest in zoning and commercial development.

Neighborhood interest in zoning was sensitized by a number of development proposals at that time. Gino's was aiming to build a drive-in fast food outlet in front of Govans School in the old streetcar loop, and neighborhood groups were adamantly opposed. In 1968, 500 residents showed up at a Zoning Board hearing and made noisy protests. The Gino's case went as far as the Court of Appeals, which ruled that a drive-in was not a restaurant and so was not allowed under existing zoning laws.

A proposed zoning change for York Road properties from Coldspring Lane to Northern Parkway was discovered to allow the kind of commercial development along York Road north of Towson, and this was successfully resisted by the Community Council and other groups.

But beyond these acts of resistance to unwanted change, the Council saw the need to come up with a plan for Govans' future development and approached the Neighborhood Design Center. VISTA workers at NDC spent over a year on a study of York Road and recommended what the CCG had already anticipated: formation of a development corporation for the corridor. The outcome was YRPAC, York Road Planning Area Committee, which assumed responsibility for planning and development issues along the corridor, leaving the Community Council to work on social issues of concern to residents. Thereafter YRPAC and CCG ran on parallel courses.

CCG was also involved with the Greater Govans Committee, a business group, in founding the original Mayor's Station, which later became Govans Multipurpose Center. Opened in 1967, Govans' Mayor's Station was the second of its kind in the city. Its mission was to provide some city services closer to the community than City Hall.
The first Mayor's representative was Bob Ayd, who served during the administration of Mayor Tommy D'Alesandro III. He was succeeded in 1975 by Madeleine Cooper, who was also prominent in the Community Council of Govans.

The Multipurpose Center completed in 1979 was built around the original storefront building but enlarged to include Govans Health Center run by Union Memorial Hospital and Govans Senior Center. Both were initiated by the Community Council.

Other programs inspired by the CCG included an emergency food center, started in 1972 to provide food for the needy; the rent-a-kid summer job program; the North Central Youth Services Bureau; crime prevention and block watch programs; the York Road Literacy Program; and Govans Youth Coalition.

For a number of years, when funding was made available for an editor from CETA (the Comprehensive Education and Training Act), CCG published The Govans Courier, which ran stories of local interest and served to develop a sense of community. CCG also co-sponsored a number of town-hall meetings on drug and alcohol abuse and worked with the Govans Council of Ministers on the Epiphany House and Ascension Homes projects. In 1987 Govans celebrated the 200th anniversary of the founding of York Turnpike in 1787, and a Govanstown Bicentennial Committee was formed under CCG's auspices. The Committee planned public lectures, conducted historic tours, published articles, and helped fund this history.

**The York Road Planning Area Committee**

The York Road Planning Area Committee evolved out of a study made in 1973 by the neighborhood Design Center at the request of the Community Council of Govans. YRPAC was incorporated in 1974, with Frank Knott as president and Dave Rhodes as Executive Director. Later Diane Frederick succeeded Knott as president and Bill Gasser and Brenda Ready served as directors.

YRPAC was a new kind of community organization in keeping with the enormous proliferation of organizations of all kinds emerging during the past half-century. It expressed the desire of an urban community to take charge of its own development by mediating the interests of developers, residents, businesses, churches, and other stakeholders in the community. It attempted to replace the periodic battles between developers and residents with an orderly process of planned development — and in large measure succeeded. During its fourteen-year life span, YRPAC made a significant impact on the York Road corridor, attracting new businesses, improving the appearance of shopping areas, and resisting developments rejected by their neighbors.

When YRPAC was formed, vacant properties along York Road were running between 25% and 30%. The surrounding neighborhoods realized that this decay of the main business corridor would lead to a loss of amenities and a decline in property values. So it proved not too difficult to recruit residents, businesspeople, church leaders, and others to serve on YRPAC committees. The corridor from City Line in the north to 39th Street in the south
was divided into three "action areas": York/Belvedere, York/Woodbourne, and York/Coldspring, each with its own planning committee. One of the new organization's first steps was to ask an advertising agency to design a corporate symbol ("Yorky," a Yorkshire terrier) and a theme ("The New York Road"). Blue New York Road street signs were placed beside the existing green street signs along the corridor.

YRPAC would never have come into being without the availability of Urban Development Block Grant money from the federal government. To this basic federal support were added grants from philanthropic foundations, such as the Goldseker Foundation, and contributions from private businesses and individuals. Private and public funding of YRPAC were approximately equal.

YRPAC was involved in dozens of individual building and renovation projects, and also developed an overall guide plan for the area. This was a planners' dream and was never implemented in its entirety, but it got people thinking about priorities. Among many projects, a few stand out as exemplary.

One of the first was occasioned by the closing of the Food Fair supermarket at York/Woodbourne. The existing building, Food Fair claimed, was too small to accommodate their style of supermarket. They tried to buy up additional land, but prices soared. YRPAC interceded, and the location was declared an Urban Renewal Area, which made federal funds available and enabled land to be condemned and purchased at lower prices. The supermarket was expanded and reopened as Pantry Pride. It is currently a Food King store.

Walker Mews apartments for the elderly has long since blended into the York Road scene, but at its inception this project was opposed by some area residents. Ironically, some perceived it as "project housing" likely to lower local property values, while others hoped to sell their property at higher prices to commercial developers. But in the course of many YRPAC meetings at which plans were presented, criticisms noted, and suggestions made, the concerns of residents were alleviated. The project was approved and completed in 1980.

The remodeling of Homeland Shopping
Center at York/Woodbourne by James Ward III was another successful YRPAC project. A fire had burned out a five-and-dime store on the block which remained empty for over a year. Various fix-up proposals were considered, but it was not until YRPAC approached Jim Ward that a design acceptable to the community was presented. Once completed, it inspired other business owners to upgrade their properties. YRPAC also commissioned the erection of a clock tower memorial to Joseph Curran, Sr. at the York/Woodbourne intersection.

The success of working through YRPAC at Homeland was not to be repeated at Belvedere Square, Jim Ward's next and more ambitious shopping center development on York Road. When Ward needed more land than was commercially available, he found the property encumbered by an old covenant of the Belvedere Association prohibiting commercial development. Instead of presenting the advantages of his plan to area residents through the YRPAC process, he chose to hit individual Belvedere area residents with lawsuits challenging the covenant — even though most were unaware of any covenant or even of the development. Residents were shocked, and a long and expensive legal battle ensued. Eventually Ward won his case (the covenant was racially discriminatory), and YRPAC was able to resume mediation. When considered in the light of reason, the shopping center plan was endorsed by an overwhelming number of area residents and has proven to be an enduring asset.

YRPAC played a happier role in assisting the Govans ministers with their Ascension Homes project. Through YRPAC's mediation, community concerns were aired and questions answered, and the project was granted community approval.

YRPAC director Brenda Ready described the mediation process as sensitive to the needs of both developers and residents. When a tentative proposal was received, she would give the developer an immediate idea of whether, in her view, the community would approve it. If he decided to proceed, she would then involve the City planners to get his site plan reviewed. If it passed, the proposal would be presented at a YRPAC meeting. Thenceforward she felt herself to be a representative of the community, rather than of the developer.

Though protracted and sometimes tedious, the YRPAC process has enabled the community to retain control of its own development and has served to educate many area people in the intricacies of planning, zoning, and economic development. Some of them, who began as volunteers, went on to become professional planners and consultants.

Eventually federal funding was withdrawn, foundation support dried up, and the community was not able to bear the entire cost of the YRPAC operation. An attempt was made to transform YRPAC into another umbrella organization, but this proposal was torpedoed at an unruly public meeting by members of a neighboring umbrella group who saw the proposed new organization as a threat to their own. YRPAC finally closed its doors in 1988, with regret, but not without a sense of accomplishment. In 1986 YRPAC had received the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Award of Excellence "For successful participation in an exemplary public/private partnership benefiting their community and serving as a worthy model for other communities."

When it was first instituted, YRPAC was intended to be a demonstration program that would eventually "put itself out of business." When this happened in 1988, there followed a hiatus when no development organization existed to mediate interests along the corridor, but quite soon it was realized that some organization would have to be created to perform at least the basic functions that YRPAC provided. The outcome was a scaled-down initiative that became York Road Development, Inc.

The Govanstowne Business Association

The Govanstowne Business Association (despite its olde worlde final "e") dates only from the late nineteen-seventies. Previously the Greater Govans Committee had served as the local business group, holding meetings and issuing door stickers to members. But the GBA introduced a new dimension with the formation of its Retail Business District.
Francis Bacon, of Van Dyke & Bacon shoes, presents a poster coloring award to a young contestant, watched by GBA president Jack Weber.

In 1979 Carol Bluestone, a marketing consultant, was engaged by the York Road Planning Area Committee (YRPAC) to conduct a survey of local business prospects and problems. When completed, the "Bluestone Report" revealed that area residents did not use the stores along York Road as much as they could. Many preferred to drive north across the city line and spend their dollars at Stewart's or Hutzler's department stores or at one of the new malls springing up in the County.

Govans shoppers listed personal safety as their first concern at all the shopping areas from Coldspring to Belvedere. At Woodbourne and Coldspring they were repelled by loiterers and winos, vacant lots with blowing trash, and dirty streets. At Woodbourne and Belvedere they listed inadequate parking and lack of variety of merchandise available. Carol Bluestone concluded that little improvement in local business could be expected unless these shopper concerns were addressed.

YRPAC was already doing its best to improve the corridor and attract new businesses. But the conditions that deterred shoppers also deterred new businesses. Local merchants had to take some of the responsibility for "cleaning up their act," by working together both to create a more attractive shopping environment and by promoting its advantages to the public. But getting independent small business owners to work together and put money in a common pot is never easy. They all have other priorities and little time for meetings. The need to tend to their own businesses is imminent, whereas the benefits of investing in joint projects seem distant and uncertain. Many say they are not interested, so the remainder have to pick up the tab. Consequently, voluntary business associations are often hamstrung by lack of funds and apathy.

The City's new Retail Business District License program (RBDL) was designed to change all that. The new law provided that if a substantial majority of local merchants agree to form a Retail Business District (RBD), they can assess all businesses in the district an annual fee based on floor area, with some exceptions. The City would then collect these fees and turn them over to the RBD, minus a small collection fee. The funds collected could be used for promotion, marketing, safety, clean-up, and other purposes.

The first RBD groups were Oldtown Mall and Market Center, in 1982. The GBA followed in
1983. A grant was obtained from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and Ann von Lossberg was engaged as an organizer to explain the program to businesspeople and gain their advice and consent. She then served as Corridor Manager for the first year of operation, after which Judy Kapfhammer took over.

The 270-plus members of the GBA together contribute nearly $50,000 annually to a fund used to improve business along York Road. Perhaps most important is the funding of a staff person who can devote full time to planning and managing the program. Beyond that, the great debate has always been between those who want to invest in promotion and those who want to improve the appearance of the corridor. Both approaches have been tried, and indeed are complimentary.

In its first year of operation, the GBA sponsored a community fair on the Senator Theater parking lot and launched The York Road Stretch, an advertising tabloid with some community news. Thereafter followed a number of campaigns aimed at encouraging residents to use local stores: coupon books, "Luckybucks," a lucky coupon lottery, and other promotions.

"Backpatter Awards" were made to GBA members who made a special effort to beautify their property by planting flowers and helping the community. The GBA worked with YRPAC in sponsoring "The Greening of York Road," which provided shrubs in tubs to merchants who agreed to tend them. The local dogs seemed to enjoy them most. Judy Kapfhammer made a special project out of cultivating the York/Bellona triangle by the war memorial, and it has recently been made the site of a permanent Govanstowne sign. Banners are hoisted on streetlights at different seasons.

In addition to Christmas decorations, the GBA has sponsored art and coloring competitions and film shows for local schoolchildren, co-sponsored town meetings on drug abuse and crime prevention, and assisted with the York Road Bicentennial.

There are few local events in which the GBA does not participate and offer assistance or prizes. The organization serves as a way for local merchants and professionals to become involved in community affairs, and the hope is that the community will in turn patronize their businesses.

The GBA, YRPAC, CCG, and CGGC are all separate, but all run on parallel tracks and often assist each other. They are typical of the way modern communities organize to address problems and try to control their destiny. They are also unique to our own time, part of our late twentieth century history that we take for granted, but in which those who come after us may take an unusual interest.
Recent Developments
GEDCO

In 1991 The Churches of the Greater Govans Community incorporated as GEDCO, Govans Ecumenical Development Corporation, and hired an Executive director — Julia Pearson — to manage operations. This evolution follows the normal growth pattern of dynamic nonprofit organizations, which move from informal organizations of concerned citizens donating their services as volunteers to professionally managed organizations able to plan programs and raise funds to implement them, thereby making a quantum leap in effectiveness.

In addition to Epiphany House senior residence and Ascension Homes, GEDCO now provides supportive services for Harford House, a residence for homeless men owned by the Housing Assistance Corporation's Special Need Program in the Oliver Community, and has restored and expanded the Gallagher Mansion as part of a 40-unit apartment development for low income seniors.

This $5.7 million project is the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Senior Housing at the Gallagher Mansion, honoring the couple whose foundation provided a $400,000 challenge grant. Major funding is from HUD's Supportive Housing for the Elderly for nearly $2.5 million. The City of Baltimore is providing $500,000 in matching funds from the HOME program.

The GEDCO Network now includes many Organizational Affiliates and Church Supporters in addition to the original CGGC founding churches.

York Road Partnership

In the summer of 1995 a new organization was established with the title A York Road Partnership. It set up three Action Groups — Residential, York Road, and Economic Development—and drew up a list of long and short-range goals and time frames. Among the residential issues targeted were traffic, crime, drugs, and neighborhood deterioration. York Road issues included trash and street cleaning, loitering, liquor license violations, and open air markets. Economic development issues included support for local businesses and a proposed study of the York Road corridor.

Govans Economic Management Senate

"GEMS' mission is to manage the economic health and stability of the housing in the Govans community by supplying financial and technical resources to resolve and prevent problems."

Founded in 1989, GEMS took over after Neighborhood Housing Service (NHS) phased out its Govans office. Chaired by Thelma Gentry and directed by Ralph Johnson, GEMS is located at 4324 York Road. It offers financial counseling to residents, working in partnership with area churches and national funding organizations, and serves as the local community housing development organization for channeling city, state, and federal funding to community housing projects.

In cooperation with Baltimore Housing Partnership and the City of Baltimore, in 1995 GEMS developed twelve new townhouses named Wilson Park Terrace in on St. Georges Avenue and Craddock Avenue in Wilson Park.
This op-ed article appeared in the May, 1993 issue of the Baltimore Sun. It dates from a time when the future of Govans Library was in doubt, after closing in 1990 "for repairs" with little hope that it would ever reopen. A group calling itself The Friends of Govans Library was formed, spearheaded by Ann Klassen, Amye Williams, Pat Elliott, and others, which successfully petitioned for the reopening of the library, raised money to assist in its restoration, and worked with the architects on the plans, redecoration, and landscaping.
Martha Bokel Remembers

I was born in the Gallagher Mansion, 5108 York Road, in 1901. Patrick Gallagher was my grandfather. When he died at the age of 59, my grandmother invited her daughter, my mother, and her husband to move into this large 22-room house. It was located off Church Lane, later called Notre Dame Lane, which led to Dolin's Orphan Home, which is where the Boumi Temple is now on Charles Street.

My earliest memories are of visiting St. Mary's churchyard with my grandmother, who never went out of mourning for her husband and always wore a black crepe bonnet and veil. I also remember riding with my sister Dorothy and brother Paul in a trap drawn by our pony, Harry. When it snowed we took the wheels off the buggy and put on runners. I was allowed to drive all around our five or six acres of land, down York Road as far as the Rossiter Avenue toll-gate and up to the Five Mile House Inn on the Walker property. I couldn't pay the toll, so that limited my travels. Different big houses had their own streetcar platforms where passengers could get on and off. Mr. Perine would go downtown on the streetcar, and sometimes I would give him a ride to "Homeland" through the big gates where St. Mary's Church is now. He was a delightful gentleman. We drove past his herd of cows at pasture and two huge stones that marked Indian graves.

I attended Miss Mary Scott's school on Woodbourne Avenue and later Notre Dame Academy, run by the Sisters of Notre Dame. The sisters had bought "Notchcliff" and managed the farm, tending the cows and growing all their own vegetables.

York Road was a dirt road then and would not be paved for many years. The streetcar lines ran up the side of the road. There was a mail car that stopped at Earp's Store and a funeral car ("Dolores") that ran to the cemeteries. But when we went downtown, I rode in the trap with my mother.

We also went to the local stores to shop. My grandmother used to write up a shopping list and give it to Mr. Webber to price the items. The Norris Store was beside Griffin's Switch, where the Govans streetcar turned around, and Mr. Griffin's son was the conductor. He would shout out "Papa's Store" when it was time to get out at the end of the line. One of the motormen was nicknamed "Apple Butter" because that was what he sold along the way. It was simply delicious! He was an enormous man!

At Miss Scott's school we studied the three Rs and music. I knew the Hicks boys and the Mosses and Abels. The Abels were delightful boys who lived on Woodbourne Avenue and at the big house, "Guilford." They just threw away their dirty shirts.
and used others. Parties in those days were very formal. We girls dressed up in white dresses with colored sashes and curled our hair. In the morning we would wear rompers to play and make paper dolls, but we always dressed up for the afternoons and had to act like ladies.

I remember our Fourth of July parties under the great maple tree in our garden, when my father and his friends set up the fireworks and sent up big paper hot-air balloons. There was a huge bowl of iced tea for everyone. My mother and father had parties all the time, and none better than at Christmas, when Uncle Lou played Santa!

When I left the Govans school I attended the Roland Park Country School. I remember my coming out party cotillion at Baltimore Country Club before it burned down.

On graduation I was offered a job at the Maryland Historical Society. Mr Harris, the director, asked me to help him out, and I stayed 42 years!

I find it difficult keeping up with things today — we have seen so many changes. Our world was one of cows, horses, chickens, guinea pigs.

We buried our own turnips in a pit lined with straw to preserve them. We made our own ice cream, smeercase, and clabber. We lighted our home with oil lamps until we had gas lamps, with mantles to light. We didn't have electricity at the Mansion until 1947. And Father Finney rode around the parish every day on his bicycle to visit his parishioners. I remember the sound of his tires on the gravel and my grandmother saying, "Here's Father Finney!"

That was nearly eighty years ago.

(Transcribed from a tape recorded interview.)
"Our parents were strict Methodists, and they believed it a sin to make our faithful family horse, Colonel, work on Sundays. That meant we walked from our home on Woodbourne Avenue to the Govanstown Methodist Episcopal Church, now called simply Govans Methodist. Because of the condition of the unpaved byways, we wore old shoes and carried good shoes in a bag. After crossing York Road, we hid our muddy shoes in the bushes, put on our good shoes, and continued on to church. We made our switch again on the way home.

"There was a tollgate on York Road tended by a man named Frank Macy. The bar was seldom lowered because people paid as a matter of course as they walked or rode through. One day we five children, plus some others of the neighborhood, pulled up to the tollgate in the carriage in which my mother occasionally drove us to town. The tollkeeper waved us through. It turned out later he had mistaken us for a carriage full of orphans from the asylum. Orphans were allowed through free. It took us quite a while for our family to live that down after the story got out.

"The toll for horse and vehicle was a nickel, which to a boy in those days was worth saving. To escape the tolls one of my brothers would turn the buggy east on Woodbourne Avenue to usually muddy St. George's Road, climb several clay banks, wade through a gravel pit east of Winston Avenue, and cut back on York Road below the tollgate. What a lot of work for our poor horse! I'm sure old Colonel would have been glad to pay the nickel toll himself, if he could have, to avoid that hill climbing.

"I remember the year of the big rat infestation. Eberding's Feed Store, at York Road and Benninghaus, burned down, thus destroying the food supply for thousands of rats. These were not just ordinary rats. They were grain-fed, nutrition-filled, strong, healthy rats....

"Govanstown then was considered a part of the city, but today you would have to drive out into the country to see that kind of scenery. It was a community of woodlands, cornfields, farmhouses, and wide meadows dotted with grazing livestock. Much of our days — until noon — was taken up with classwork and music lessons at the Morven School, a private school in the 700 block of Woodbourne Avenue operated by Miss Marie Scott. In the evenings we children gathered near home to play I Spy and Red Rover in the dusk. But our afternoons were most wonderful. Two blocks south of York and Bellona stood the great gateposts and gatehouse which formed the entrance to Homeland. But then it was more commonly called Perine's Woods. This wood was the delight of children throughout the area, and how beautiful and peaceful it was! There were huge, dogtooth violets, and even larger purple violets to be found there, trailing arbutus, jack-in-the-pulpit, both white and purple trilliums. It was a fresh, cool place for children on a hot day. In the winter there was just as much color, and even more visitors. In freezing weather, children and grown-ups alike came out to the big frozen pond for ice skating, and I can still see the bright, flashing colors of the skaters' clothing and hear their shouts of merriment. The pond is known today as Springlake."—Lillian Ballard, in the Sun Magazine, May 24, 1970
Dorothy Earp
Remembers

"I had a wonderful childhood" says Dorothy Worsham Earp, who came with her family to live in Govans from Canton in 1913. "I was spoiled rotten — the first grandchild of eight brothers and sisters." Coming to Govans as a city-bred eight-year-old was wonderful to her. Close to the new house her father built on Beaumont Avenue was a pine forest that ran as far as Beauregard Avenue (now the Alameda), where children would pick wild flowers.

York Road in those days was a broad highway with double streetcar tracks down the East side and lined with shady trees. There were few cars and many horse-drawn wagons and carriages.

"Miss Clara, daughter of Captain Benninghaus of 'The Anchorage' at the end of Harwood Avenue, drove an 'Electric,' one of the first motor cars in Govans. She was a familiar sight, and as far as I can remember she never drove any other kind of car. Mr. Lee Daly, son of Owen Daly the banker, owned a Stanley Steamer. It was a two-seater, looked more like a buggy, with carbide gas lamps and many valves for control. Even so, when the steam was up, it was hard to stop, so when he wished to stop for a pack of Pall Malls at Parr's Drug Store, he would jump out about where the gas station is now at Woodbourne, run down to the drug store and buy his cigarettes, then run out and catch his car again at Homeland Avenue. He would then continue home to Cedarlawn, where he would literally stake the car — tie the steering wheel to a post and let it circle around until the steam died down. Mrs. Earp also remembers the street cars, Govans' lifeline to Baltimore for many residents: "My early memories were of the old trolley, with a motorman and a conductor. They knew everyone who rode regularly with them. If you went to sleep, they would wake you when it came to your street. I remember a fat, jolly motorman we called 'Apple Butter.' His wife made this delicious concoction, and he stopped off along the road to deliver her orders. My mother-in-law was quite a favorite of his. She liked to shop at Lexington Market and would pick up the car at Eutaw and Fayette, where he would get off and take her huge basket and help her on. Then, when they arrived at Beaumont Avenue, he would get off first, help her off, and then carry her basket across the road. Truly personal service! Now there are times when the bus driver doesn't even know the streets. . .."

— Dorothy Worsham Earp, 1987

Dorothy Worsham Earp recorded some of her reminiscences for the Oral History Project. In 1967 she wrote "Govans As I Remember It," in the Govans Collection at the Govans Branch of Enoch Pratt Free Library.
"School No. 3, District 9, Govanstown, Md." reads the sign held by young Newton Johnson. Dating from around 1908, this photo was taken when Govans was part of Baltimore County.

Newton Johnson Remembers

Govans Public School as I remember it in 1896 was a four room brick building heated by a coal stove — one stove to a room. The fuel, hard coal, had to be carried in scuttles from the basement to the first and second floors.

There was no water supply on the school property. Our water supply came from one of two wells on Govane Avenue. Usually two boys would be assigned to take a tin bucket to one of the two wells and pump it full of fresh water. This was brought back to school and placed at the front or back of the room (never on the side). The thirsty pupils partook of the water by dipping a long handled dipper into the bucket. It was fortunate for us that microbes had not been invented at that time.

Now, as far as toilet facilities are concerned — just say they were even further back than the "Chick Sales" era! Holy smokes! Up to now the teachers and the teaching have not been mentioned. In the "Gay Nineties" period the teachers were Miss Ollie Harrison, who taught the "chart class," first, second, and third grades; Miss Nanny Feast, who taught fourth and fifth grades; and Mr. John T. Thompson, who taught the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. They were all good teachers.

One of the boys, Clarence Cooper, eventually became superintendent of Baltimore County Schools. Elsie Lewis taught at Towson High School. Elsie was at one time the entire eighth grade. The Principal, Mrs. Thompson, in addition to teaching her all that was required, taught her Latin. It is my opinion that, at the time she graduated from eighth grade, she knew more Latin than most college graduates.

From The Govanstown Courier, April, 1975
During the time we lived on Bellona Avenue there was no radio, no television, no airports with large planes landing and taking off, very few telephones, and automobiles were a real novelty. I recall running to the window whenever I heard one approaching. Many homes had no inside toilets. In the area where we lived there was no sewage system. This meant having outhouses in the back yards. Some were built over a septic tank, but some were not. In the latter case it was necessary to have someone come to haul away the contents. Lime was thrown down the hole to keep down the odor. It was not until 1927 that our houses were connected to the sewer....

Govans School consisted of two rooms downstairs and two upstairs. To the west was a large hall which had a front door used by the girls and a back door used by the boys. The wall that divided the upstairs rooms had blackboards on either side of it. This wall was on tracks which allowed it to be moved into the hall. Each morning all the pupils met in these two rooms. The Bible was read, the Lord's Prayer recited, and a hymn was sung. Miss Nannie Feast played the piano while we sang.

We had no playground equipment, but we were happy. We girls would play "Home, Sheep, Run" or jump rope with our own ropes. In winter we would slide on the ice. On the girls' side there was a water closet or outhouse, and another one on the boys' side....

There was no water in our house, so we had to obtain it from Mrs. Kenwick who lived next door. It was my job as the youngest child to carry water for drinking and cooking from her basement. Water for washing was gotten at the windmill on the other side of the house....

We did not go to the doctor for every little ailment. Mother then used home remedies. For a sore throat we gargled with a solution of tea, alum, and other ingredients. For a cold, my chest was rubbed with capsicum vaseline, and I had to drink hot ginger tea. How I disliked that tea! Once, when my brother had a sprained ankle, Mother fried an egg in linseed oil and applied it to the ankle. Hot poultices were often used in those days. . . .

"Homeland," then Mr. E. Glen Perine's estate, afforded us much pleasure. We gathered violets in the spring and in the fall brought home hickory nuts and chestnuts. Holding a flat iron between our knees, we cracked the nuts with a hammer. Picking out the hickory kernals was laborious work, but if we wanted them for candy, it had to be done. Mrs. Muller showed us how to make taffy and how to pull it. Where Springlake Way now intersects with Northern Parkway there used to be a grove of chestnut trees. Many of those nuts did we gather!

In the summer time we would pack a lunch and picnic down by the lakes. Taking off our shoes and stockings, we would then walk over the slippery moss-covered stones which formed a passageway between the lakes. Near the lakes was a spring. Stone steps led down to the spring, and on the side hung an iron dipper suspended by a chain. This was known as "Indian Spring." Mr. Perine, who lived in the city during the winter, would not drink the city water. Periodically he sent his manservant out to draw water from this spring. Homeland was full of springs. . . .

I spoke of the dusty condition of York Road. How well do I remember the muddy condition of Rosebank Avenue! Unless your overshoes fitted
very snugly, you were likely to leave one behind as you crossed the street. My friend Esther once received from a humorous suitor a letter addressed to Mudbank Avenue! The post-man delivered it without question. His name was Mr. Parsons, and he drove around in a buggy pulled by a white horse whose name was Daisy. Mr. Parsons knew the location of his customers without looking at the addresses. By the way, we received mail twice a day.

Life was not all play for me, but I suspect the work I had to do made me strong. Not for one minute do I regret having to do chores. I was not paid for working, neither was I given an allowance. If I happened to have a penny to spend, I would stand before the candy counter and ask "How many for a cent?" As I walked up Bellona Avenue on my way home, I would dole out the candy to myself, making it last as long as possible.

It was my job to carry a gallon coal oil can to the store to be filled. In lieu of a cap, a potato was stuck in the spout. The can was always greasy, so I would hold it as far away from my clothes as possible as I walked back home.

Let me tell you about washday in the early 1900's. There were no automatic washing machines to my knowledge and no driers. I imagine that every housewife owned a wash boiler — a long metal container which was used for soaking and sometimes boiling the soiled clothes. The clothes were put into the boiler and covered with water to which slivers of yellow soap were added. The boiler was put on the stove so the water was heated. Later the clothes were removed and put into a wooden washing machine. The clothes were tossed around in the machine by someone turning a handle. Then they were fed into a wringer, also operated by hand.

On washday the bench was brought from the back porch into the kitchen. On it were placed two metal tubs. The clothes were rinsed in the first tub and rinsed again in the second tub where bluing had been added. This was a blue liquid which made white clothes look whiter. Then the clothes were put into a large wicker basket and carried out to the yard where they were fastened with wooden pins on clothes lines strung across the yard. In cold weather that was a job I hated. The clothes would freeze stiff and my hands would be numb.

You may wonder how the clothes were dried on a rainy day. In the attic we had two clothes horses. Each one was made of wood in three sections which could be opened like a folding screen or formed into a triangle. Across each section were three narrow pieces of wood, one above the other. The clothes were then hung over these pieces. Also, we always had a line stretched across the kitchen where some of the clothes could be hung.

I said we had running water at our Rosebank house. However, our bathroom had nothing but an old-fashioned tub which rested on four iron feet. It was my duty to fill the water pitchers in each bedroom and empty the chamber pots. Each bedroom had a washstand where we kept a china bowl and pitcher, a soap dish, and a tooth brush holder. A wooden rack was used to hold towels and wash cloths.

During the years that we had a cow, we sometimes made butter. Cream was put into a wooden churn. Someone had to turn the handle which kept the paddle inside the churn in motion. After a while flecks of butter would be seen floating around which would finally adhere to each other to form a mass of butter. This mass was then removed to a china bowl and pressed and pressed with a flat wooden spoon until all the liquid was pressed out. Salt was then worked into the butter in order to keep it from getting a queer taste. The liquid left in the churn looked like skim milk and was called buttermilk. This could be used in cooking, or one could drink it.

Chickens were my responsibility. I had to feed them, give them water, gather the eggs, and clean the henhouse. If a thunderstorm was imminent, I had to catch the little chickens and put them where they would not be drowned.

My big responsibility was delivering milk twice a day and collecting the money on Saturday. Then too I gathered bags of leaves to be used as bedding for the cows.

Setting the table, washing dishes, dusting, and some of the ironing fell to my lot. Also I had to fill the kerosene lamps, trim the wicks, and wash the chimneys. There was no electricity in our house, but there was a gas range and one gas jet in the
kitchen. During the winter we kept a coal fire going in a black iron cook stove. That meant carrying a bucket of nut coal up from the cellar. There were two bins in the cellar — one to hold #2 hard coal for the furnace, the other to hold the coal for the kitchen stove. After papa's death, when I was 16 years old, I did much of the caring for the fires. I could split wood for kindling and shovel coal and carry out ashes as well as anyone else. I had to learn how to bank the fires at night and how to cut back on the dampers. If the fire went out during the night (which sometimes happened, because our chimney had a powerful draft), I would have to clean out the furnace and put in some newspaper, kindling, and then coal to start a fresh fire. A portable oil stove helped to heat our parlor, which often was quite cool.

Instead of electric refrigerators, we had a large ice chest which was kept in the pantry. Lawrence Ament came daily with blocks of ice which he handled with a pair of tongs. How my dog hated the ice man and his tongs!

It was the custom to house clean twice a year — fall and spring. Our floors were not finished, but had strips of matting tacked to the floor. This was removed in the fall, the floor was washed, newspapers were laid down, and carpet put on top. Years later we first stained the floors and used rugs. Still later we had hardwood floors....

We had no supermarkets during my childhood. At Norris's store we could buy groceries, vegetables, candy, coal, and feed for the animals, as well as coal oil. We had a big garden and raised vegetables, had three kinds of grapes, and grew blackberries and raspberries. We always had eggs, and often killed a chicken for meat. Ice cream was made from cream that we skimmed from our cows' milk. My brother always turned the freezer. If I got the chance, I would lick the paddle!

Practically every drug store had a soda fountain. A chocolate soda cost fifteen cents. All of the department stores were downtown on Howard, Lexington, and Charles Streets. Govans could boast a small notions store where one could buy cotton thread, a spool of silk, a paper of pins or needles, and a few other articles.

Life was simple in those days. There was not much police protection. In fact it was not needed. Our fire engine was drawn by horses. Garbage was collected by Mr. Fisher in an open wagon. Food was cheap, salaries, wages, and taxes were low. Our first tax bill was for $10.00. Life had advantages and disadvantages. I think I have lived in a history-making era and am thankful to have these memories.

— Eleanor Matthews, from an unpublished manuscript in Govans Branch Library

The illustrations of household utensils are of the kind Eleanor would have used in the early 1900s.
Judge J. Howard Norris Remembers

"As boy in the eighties, I skated over the large lake on David M. Perine's property. My chums and I swam there, too — but not often, because Mr. Perine had a habit of sneaking up and stealing our clothes while we were in the water. But Mr. Perine was very kind to hunters. He'd let the hounds and pink-coated huntsmen of what was then called the Elkridge Fox Hunting Club rendezvous on his place. And I recall that he'd permit men from Govanstown to hunt 'coons in his woods. Many's the time I've gone to bed to the baying of the hounds as they treed a 'coon. I also remember that the woods were filled with robins, and we boys used to fire shotguns into the trees loaded with flocks of them. The birds would shower down, and we'd take them home to our mother, who made them into pies.

I was born in 1874, my father having been a plasterer who always walked to work in the city. As a youngster, I attended a two-room school on the site of the present Govans School.

The Govanstown of the 80s and 90s was small; there were only 125 families there. It was a real country town. But it wasn't sleepy. York Road was crowded with farmers driving flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, and big hay wagons. The farmers made a habit of stopping in the town. There were plenty of blacksmith shops — owned by John Cross, Jessie Bell, Charles Yates, Joseph Allison, and Henry Akehurst. There was a carriage shop, owned by Lum Hubbard — and H.B. Everding's husk factory, where the farmers brought corn husks which were then cleaned and used for mattress stuffing. There was a good hotel, too. The Brick Hotel was its name. The farmers gathered there to drink and eat. But they weren't the only customers: in the winter you'd see as many as 400 sleighs belonging to city people parked in the area.

When I was still pretty young, I went to work with my brother in his general store, located at the place where the streetcars turn today. But in the 90s we bought the Guilford Hotel, located in the triangle where York and Bellona meet, and converted it into a store. A good deal of our business — and that of the other stores, too — came from the big estates. We served Stoneleigh, owned by George Brown; Anneslie, the property of Lennox Birkhead; Drumquhazel, owned by Elisha Walker; another Drumquhase, as it was spelled, owned by H.M. Bash; Evesham, the Reverdy Johnson place, and CM. Benninghaus's Anchorage. And there were more — Dr. John A. Craig's Ravenswood, the actor John E. Owens' Aigburth Vale, and George W. Abell's Woodbourne, on Woodbourne Avenue. Also on that avenue was St. Mary's, the handsomest place of all. It was owned by William T. Walters, and there Percheron horses were bred and grapes grown in vast hothouses. Across the road from the Walters place was Tivoli — owned by Enoch Pratt, who, in spite of his great gift to the city, was personally the worst miser I ever knew. We had the first phone in Govanstown and I'll never forget the time Mr. Pratt came in to use it. I told him it would cost 10 cents, so he left, saying it would be cheaper for him to drive to town with his message.

Govanstown was a fine place in which to grow up."

— Judge J. Howard Norris, Baltimore Sunday Sun Magazine, February 1, 1953.
The triangle at the York Road and Bellona Avenue intersection is a bustling business area today, but I like to remember it as the quiet, semi-rural spot it was at the beginning of the 1900s, when my father's store, the J. T. Norris and Son Central Store, was the only business house in the immediate vicinity...

The store was busy from 7 in the morning until 9 at night — closing time was an hour later on Saturdays — six days a week. But it was busy in a quiet, efficient way, for my father was a serious man and took his business seriously. It was characteristic of him that he wouldn't allow his children in the place, particularly the girls, for anything more than brief visits.

My sisters — Ella, Gertrude, Lula, Caddie, Pearl, and Elizabeth — and I went in from time to time for a bottle of root beer, sarsparilla, or ginger ale, which was kept in one of the ice chests in a back room of the store. Or for fig newtons or big ginger cartwheels which father bought by the carton and sold by the pound. But we didn't linger. If we did, he'd flip our ears and tell us to scoot. My brothers, Howard, Ward, and Charles, didn't spend much time there, either. My oldest brother, Will, who became a partner, was the one exception to this rule.

But the place was a gathering point for everyone else up and down York Road. For one thing, the store had the first public telephone in the section, a tremendous affair as big as a grandfather clock, which hung from a wall and was operated by a crank and a dial. I think calls cost a dime.

There was no electricity in the store for many years, not until long after many other Baltimore concerns had it. Father lit the place with kerosene lamps with big reflectors which hung from the ceiling.

The lamplight, plus the big pot-bellied coal-burning stove which he kept well stoked during the winter, made the store a cozy place. Another attraction for the men as they sat around the stove was their prerogative of sampling any baskets of apples that might be standing around, or the soda crackers in the big barrel there. Various visitors were inclined to sample quite freely, which sometimes irritated my father. But he said nothing, for in those days a grocer had to be awfully careful never to offend customers, not even the ones who owed him money...."

— Grace Norris Rodgers, aged 81, in the Sunday Sun Magazine, September 14, 1958
"Drumquhazel' was a working farm of 27 acres, much the same as it was before the Civil War. We grew corn, vegetables, asparagus, celery, apples, pears, and grapes. My grandmother taught me a rhyme:

Concord grapes are very good grapes
But Delaware grapes are better....

I used to plough the field where we are sitting. We also had horses, mules, cows, and hogs. My worst memories, which still haunt me, are of slaughtering the hogs. Hearing them holier and seeing them hung up by their feet. Their hair and bristles were taken off with boiling water. It was a horrible experience.

Ours was like an ante-bellum farm. I was raised by the blacks and felt more at home among the blacks than the whites. I liked the back of the house. I was the youngest in the family — basically Quakers. I didn't take to the Quakers — didn't subscribe to turning the other cheek. I thought there was a certain amount of falsehood about them I didn't find among the blacks.

One of my earliest recollections was of Sam Myers, who used to live on Walker Avenue near Sherwood. He was a Civil War type if there ever was one — one of the finest men I've ever known, an Uncle Remus. He would shoot game — quail, pheasants — on our property and hornsquabble Miss Lucy, my grandmother. Told her he'd shot it miles away near where Morgan College is now.

I remember one incident when I was about five years old. We were standing out by the hitching post in front of the house, and I was talking with Sam about something and called him "Sir." He came over and put both his big hands on my shoulders and looked down at me and said, "You never call me 'Sir.'" That brings back a lot of emotion welling up right now... because of how things have changed.
"Drumquhazel," the home of the Walker family, was torn down to develop the Drumcastle Shopping Center and the Drumcastle Apartments.

He used to get me to run across the York Road to the old Five Mile House to bring him some Run, Johnny, Run — that translates into R. J. Reynolds' chewing tobacco. He was always my constant advisor. One day he saw me looking puzzled and asked me what I was doing. I told him I had to fell a pine tree. "Tell me where you want it to lie and give me the ax," he said. I did so, and he felled that 60 foot pine tree so it went right down the line.

There were still ex-slaves living across the York Road on Schwartz Avenue. Adolphus Garrett was coachman and later chauffeur to my grandmother — he served as a foil to Sam Myers. We used to gather down near our old barn, and one day there was a bunch of yellow jackets buzzing around a barrel of hard cider. Sam had a .22 rifle and would slip in a scatter shot and knock a yellow jacket right out of the sky. Then he'd put in a .22 short and give the rifle to Adolphus, and of course he'd miss completely. Adolphus never did figure out what was happening.

We had an ice pond where we used to cut ice for the ice house in the winter. When it got to be 4" thick, we'd cut it. There was an inclined plane so we could slide it up to a wagon and take it to the ice house. There we put sawdust between each layer, and it would last until August. We had to buy ice in the fall. We brought ice into the house in an ice box. The ice house was on a hillside, a very functional building. I was amazed how efficient it was. It seemed like a cavern hundreds of feet deep, but it wasn't. You could walk in at ground level, where there was a spring that cooled crocks of milk. For Sunday breakfast a special treat was to have clabber, made of sour cream and sugar.

The York Road has been very kind to the Walker family. The land was sold to develop the Drumcastle shopping center, and we also owned lots at York and Belvedere and at 5820 York Road. The last lot, here at Drumcastle, was sold just this last December."

— J. Cooper Walker, 1987
Edna Wasson Remembers

There was singing in the streets of Govans I knew as a girl. You heard it almost every afternoon.

The singers were children, the pupils of County School No.3. They sang as they came out of the schoolhouse door and as they trudged through the thick dust of York Road to their homes. It was happy singing, and I remember that time was kept by boys who clicked bones together. The bones sounded something like castanets ....

Those after-school sings are among my happiest childhood memories. Maybe that's because Govans in the early years of the century offered only simple pleasures — pound parties, named that because you brought a pound of cake or candy, as your friends did, to someone's house; masquerade parties and skating parties on the pond at Notre Dame School.

Fires caused the most excitement; when the bell rang in the firehouse on Lyman avenue and the horse-drawn engine burst out, merchants dashed from their stores, teachers dismissed classes, and people scampered from their homes. Fires were so much fun that I wasn't particularly horrified, even when my father's blacksmith shop burned.

Govans was a tiny place in 1900. After that, it began to grow. In the eighties and nineties it had been an isolated country village, its economy depending largely on the great estates that ringed it — David M. Perine's Homeland, George W. Abell's Woodbourne, Enoch Pratt's Tivoli, William Lanahan's Blenheim, William T. Walter's St. Mary's, for example.

Then people with city jobs began to move out and build homes along York Road and Evesham Avenue, and real-estate operators came, too. One of them started a development behind the school; residents called it "The Promised Land" because the developer promised so much.

You could count the community's business establishments on one hand, practically. The Norris family kept a grocery at the triangle formed by the intersection of York Road and Bellona Avenue; another, at what is now Govane avenue and Campbell Lane, was called Griffin's.

When the streetcars' reached there the conductors would yell, "Griffin's store, the end of the 5c fare." Because you had to pay an extra 2 or 3 cents to travel farther, most people got out and walked, even though their homes were a mile away.

Parr's was the town's drug store; the clerk who made the nickel ice cream sodas there was John Walsh, whose father kept the gatehouse at the Walters estate. Nearby, on York Road at Homeland Avenue, was Govans Post Office; a Mr. Wilson was postmaster....

The center of my universe was the Govans school, which then had four rooms and four teachers, each teacher being responsible for two grades. The curriculum was the standard three Rs; such frills as our home cooking class — the term "home economics" wasn't in use in Baltimore County then — were unusual. That cooking class was well thought of by our families, and indeed it gave us plenty of basic cooking information. One of the things we learned was how to bake bread; no girl could hope to become a successful housewife without that knowledge, the teacher told us. She traveled from school to school to teach us cooking."

Govans Landmarks

The McCabe Mansion
5209 York Road

One of the few large houses on York Road to survive from the 19th century is the McCabe Mansion, built around 1850 by Colonel Lawrence McCabe. The Colonel and his brother were noted construction engineers who specialized in bridges and tunnels. They built the North Avenue bridge and the St. Paul Street bridge and tunnel for the B&O Railroad in Baltimore, and were the largest bridge and tunnel contractors in the state of Maryland.

The high point — and perhaps also the low point — of McCabe's career was the construction of the Holland Tunnel in New York City, which encountered many problems and lost money. As a result the Colonel had to sell the mansion and moved across York Road to a little cottage where he lived quietly with his daughter.

Glen Seitz bought the mansion in 1950 and converted it into a funeral home — "Baltimore's Newest Modernized Mortuary." He took down the original entrance and added a grandiose portico with four giant order columns. In 1978 the mansion was purchased by Guinevere Redd, whose family continued to operate it as a funeral home.

The house is built of marble and has three impressive marble fireplaces.

Cedarcroft
6204 Sycamore Road

The Cedarcroft community takes its name from the original house and estate of George M. Lamb, a wealthy produce and pork packing merchant who was a Trustee of the Sheppard-Pratt Hospital and director of the Savings Bank of Baltimore. The original wooden frame house, possibly dating from 1810, was extensively remodeled in the Italianate style and Victorian gingerbread decoration added, which has since been removed.

The Cedarcroft estate was originally the site of the Govan's Town Races, which brought large crowds to the area and filled the local hostelries. It is said George Lamb purchased the 45 acre estate for his son, Philip, but he certainly spent a great deal of time there himself. In their 1911 volume, Men of Mark in Maryland, David Carroll and Thomas Boggs describe George Lamb as "a great home lover, and his chief pleasures were found in his country home, where it was always his greatest delight to dispense hospitality to his friends with his family gathered around him."

The estate was subdivided in the early twentieth century and developed as a suburban residential community. "Cedarcroft" is one of the few old homes that have survived the subdivision of their original estates.
The Gallagher Mansion
5108 York Road

Now finally restored and expanded after a long period of abandonment, the Gallagher Mansion has a long history going back to the early 1800s. Patrick Gallagher, from whom the mansion takes its present name, did not purchase the property until 1873.

The property on which the mansion now stands originally belonged to a British iron ore company and was confiscated after the Revolutionary War. In 1793 it was purchased by James Bryan, who gave part of it to his granddaughter Mary in 1838. She leased the property to Dr. Benjamin Woods in 1848, and he is believed to have built the present mansion around 1855. Woods sold the property to Rachel Vaughan in 1866, who sold it to Patrick Gallagher in 1873.

A native of Ireland, Gallagher settled in Govans, opened a grocery store, and became Baltimore County road supervisor and tax assessor. The house made a fitting home for the locally prominent Gallagher family and was thereafter known as "Pleasant Plains." Descendants of the Gallaghers, the Bokels, owned it until 1972, when it was bought by the Sherwood Ford dealership. Subsequently left vacant and in disrepair, the building was vandalized and the roof burned in the 1980s.

The stone mansion was designed in the Italian style popular in the 1850s, but a mansard roof in the French Second Empire style was added in 1881, after a fire damaged the original.

The Senator Theatre

Opened on October 5, 1939, with "Stanley and Livingstone," the Senator Theatre is one of few remaining picture palaces dating from the heyday of Hollywood. Designed by John J. Zink in the Art Deco style and built by E. Eyring and Sons for Durkee Enterprizes, the Senator cost some $250,000 — a considerable sum when admission prices were 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children. The entrance lobby has a fine terrazzo floor and is decorated by murals by J. McGill Mackall, whose work is also found in the War Memorial building downtown.

Movie houses of the 1930s were intended to inspire awe and fantasy where huge audiences could marvel at the wonder of moving pictures and glamorous stars and escape the reality of hard times. Often they featured Greek, Roman, or Ancient Egyptian themes, colored sunburst lighting, murals, and organs that appeared and retracted into the floor. By comparison with some seating over 3,000, the Senator seats a comparatively modest 934 — still large by modern standards, and not easy to fill in an age of TV films and videorecorded movies.

Originally a neighborhood movie house, the Senator began showing first-run features in the 1960s. Today the sidewalk outside the entrance bears witness to the many world premieres of John Waters and other movies launched at this historic movie theatre. It is now listed as a historic monument and combines a sense of period grandeur with the latest big screen and Dolby sound equipment, which can literally "blow you away" in mind as well as body.
Govans Firehouse
5708 Bellona Avenue

"In September, 1891, Baltimore County commissioned the former stable at Bellona and Lyman Avenue to be converted into an engine house, police station, and jail. This was the first fire protection for Govanstown. When the first St. Mary's Church burned in 1856, the villagers saved the priest's house by throwing snow on it.

The arrival of the new horsedrawn chemical engine in October created a fantastic celebration such as the quiet village had never seen — 3,000 people turned out, there was a fine parade, and speeches and fireworks at night.

In 1909 the horsedrawn chemical engine was replaced by a two-horse hose wagon and chemical engine. The fire engine horses finally retired to pasture in 1917 when the new-fangled motorized pumper drove into Govanstown. In 1919, with the annexation of Baltimore County land, the fire station, its men, and equipment became part of the Baltimore City Fire Department (Engine Co. No. 43).

Govans was the oldest fire house in continuous operation in Baltimore until it closed in 1986. We can at least continue to enjoy its building, which was recently renovated into offices and an apartment. The acid-washed brick exterior and new station door reflect the building's original facade.

— Ann von Lossberg, from the Bicentennial Historic House Tour guide, 1987

Dr. Merrillat's Academy
510 Harwood Avenue

The building at 510 Harwood Avenue, one of the oldest in the neighborhood, has an interesting history. It reputedly housed Dr. Merrillat's Academy, a school for the sons of unreconstructed Southerners after the Civil War. It serves to remind us that Maryland was a border state with divided loyalties, and the war caused intense local animosities between partisans loyal to either side. After the defeat of the South, these wounds took a long while to heal, and some unregenerate Southerners took pains to continue their traditions by means of separate schools. What is now The Alameda was once Beauregard Avenue in pre-Civil War days.

This building later housed the Govans YMCA around 1900, and in the 1910's one room served as the first Govanstown Library. In the 1920's it was used as a meetingplace for two masonic lodges, the Tuscan Lodge and The Ancient Free and Accepted Masons. Later it became the home of the Govans Veterans of Foreign Wars, when this photo was taken.

The building is in the Greek Revival style, one of the eclectic architectural styles of the Victorian era, competing with the Gothic Revival style which featured intricate decoration and "gingerbread" fretwork. It is characterized by simple rectangular fenestration and small "eyebrow" windows around the attic story.
Govans' Future

It's always easier to chronicle the past than to predict the future. Those who lived in Govan's Town village could hardly imagine the city landscape that exists today, or what effect the coming of the streetcar line would have on the growth of their community. But the period of rapid growth, 1900-1950, has long since passed; there is just no more land to build on, and unless houses are torn down to make way for new development, Govans will most likely remain more or less as it is for many years to come.

Govans is part of Baltimore City, and its future is closely linked to the City's prosperity or decline. As the City's tax base erodes, more middle class homeowners sell up and move out, and fewer taxpayers remain to support the City's poor and the City's problems. When the process of annexation ceased at the present city line, the possibility for Baltimore to grow along with its affluent suburbs was permanently stymied — and now the older County neighborhoods are also in decline. It would be nice to imagine the entire Greater Baltimore Area re-integrated as one economic unit, but that seems a political impossibility for the foreseeable future.

In any event, the future of Baltimore City is largely beyond the control of Govans dwellers, and they have their own problems to deal with closer to home. The York Road corridor is always in need of revitalization, it seems. One intensive effort, such as the formation of YorkPAC, succeeds for awhile, but urban corridors are always running down unless continually refurbished.

In Baltimore County today a major effort is being made toward what is now called community conservation, to prevent older communities becoming run-down. It goes beyond the commercial revitalization programs such as those we have seen in Govans, in that keeping local merchants in business is seen as a reflection of the prosperity of entire neighborhoods. If incomes decline or the affluent move away, residents can't support businesses, and they too move or fail. As I write, too many banks, stores, restaurants have closed down along York Road during the past year and remain vacant. Whether this is an indicator of the declining income of residents or their preference for shopping in the malls of Towson and elsewhere is hard to say. In the past, Govans residents, merchants, professionals, and ministers have all worked together to preserve the neighborhood and solve community problems. I have no doubt they will continue to do so in the future.