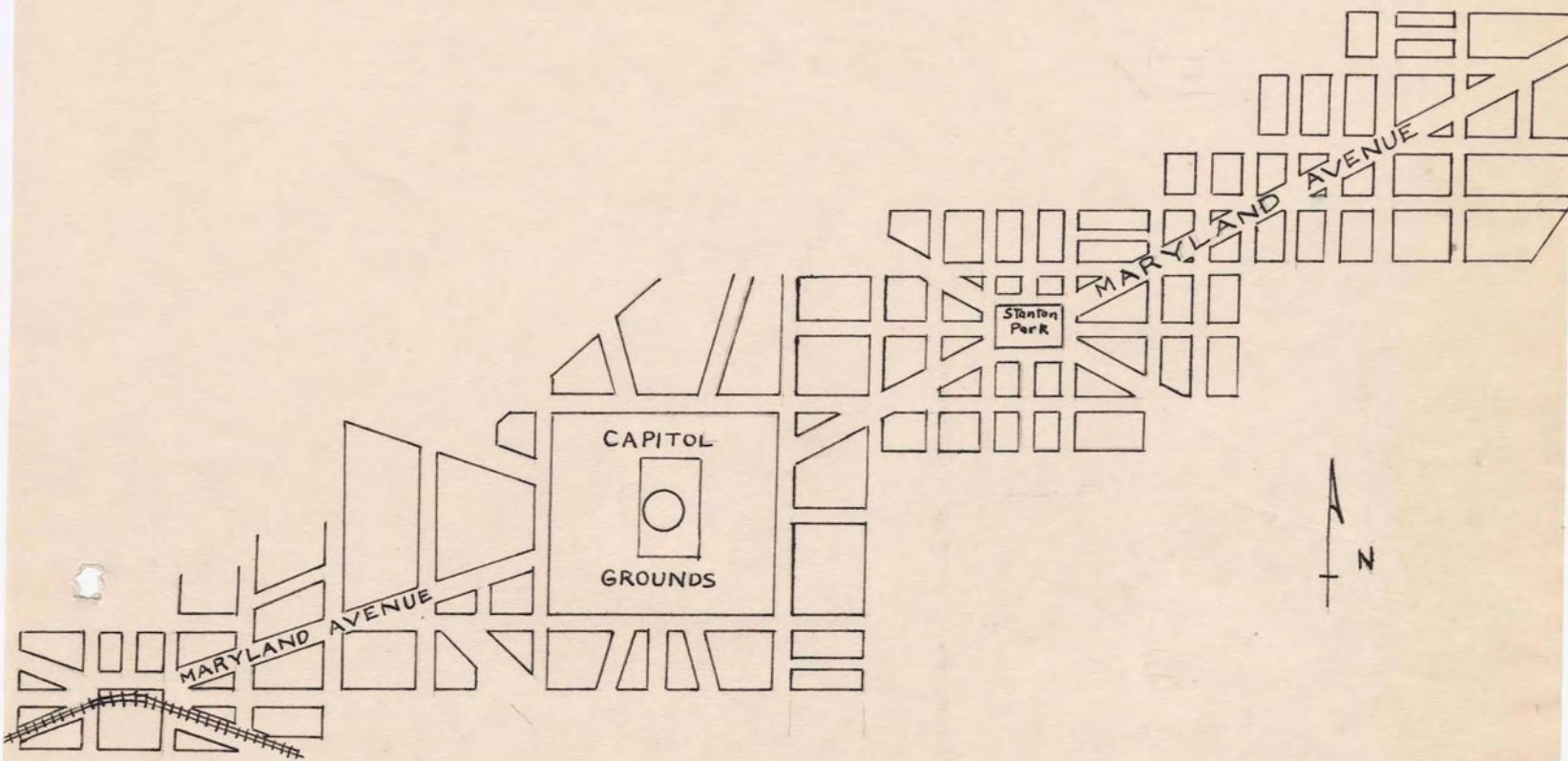


THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARYLAND AVENUE
IN THE NATION'S CAPITOL

A THESIS PREPARED
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FOR INITIATION INTO THE
BETA CHAPTER OF MARYLAND
OF
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MAY 3, 1935



PLAN OF MARYLAND AVENUE

SUMMARY

Maryland Avenue, as planned by L'Enfant, was to be one of the principal avenues of the city radiating from the Capitol building. After the avenues and streets were laid out, the Government disposed of the land along them not to be used for public buildings.

One of the first property owners on Maryland Avenue was Robert Brent, first mayor of the city, who erected a fine mansion at 12th and Maryland Avenue, S. W. Mr. Sewell, an early resident, built a large brick house at 2nd and Maryland Avenue, N. E. It was from this house that a shot was fired that killed the horse Gen. Ross, commander of the British land forces, was riding up Maryland Avenue after the Battle of Bladensburg August 25, 1814.

Land in vicinity of Maryland Avenue, S. W., was very swampy but with the draining of these swamps, settlement came to the Avenue and it was here that some of the finest houses in the city stood. When the railroad tracks were laid along the avenue, this section was cut off from the rest of the city and developed less rapidly. Maryland Avenue in Southwest was first graded in 1850. Later it was paved with sections of cobblestone, wood and granite. It was first paved with asphalt in the period 1883-1902. Within the last 3 years most of the Avenue in Southwest has been resurfaced.

Maryland Avenue, N. E., developed slowly and it was not until 1872 that it was first graded and graveled. A few years later the whole avenue in Northeast was paved with asphalt blocks.

Practically all of this paving was replacing with a sheet asphalt paving in recent years. In 1914 a center parkway was constructed in the middle of the Avenue from Stanton Park to 15th Street at the time the Avenue was being resurfaced, making it one of the most beautiful in the city.

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JAMES CROGGON and JOHN PROCTOR

WASHINGTON EVENING STAR

MAJOR DAVISON

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CLIFFORD LANHAM

SUPERINTENDENT OF TREES AND PARKING IN D. C.

CAPTAIN WHITER *Hurst*

DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS IN D. C.

SAMUEL HARRISON

RELEASE ENGINEER IN CHARGE OF RECORDS IN D. C.

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THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARYLAND AVENUE
IN THE NATION'S CAPITOL

L'ENFANT'S PLAN

"The Congress of the United States on July 16, 1790, established a permanent seat of government and authorized commissioners to be appointed by the President to purchase land for the site. The agreement was executed, delivered and entrusted to Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant to prepare plans for laying out a city." L'Enfant, a native of France, had always been impressed by the broad, tree-lined avenues of Versailles and Paris, and it was with these in mind that he undertook to plan the city.

By L'Enfant's plan the Capitol building was the grand centre from which streets and avenues radiated like the spokes of a wheel. The streets radiated at right angles and the avenues diagonally. The avenues were twice the width of the streets or one-hundred sixty feet, which width they are to the present day with a few exceptions.

EARLY HISTORY OF PROPERTY ALONG MARYLAND AVENUE

Maryland Avenue extended from Boundary Avenue, now Florida Avenue, to Fourteenth Street west. The portion of Maryland Avenue in the eastern part of the city was slow to develop, but Maryland Avenue Southwest developed rapidly and soon became a section of the city in which the finest houses stood.

Land along the Avenue was acquired as a gift from the Government or bought for a small sum. Much of the undesirable

land in swampy sections remained in the hands of the Government for many years.

The square south between 11th, 12th and C Streets and Maryland Avenue, No. 326 of ten lots, was, in 1794, assigned to a Mr. Young but in 1797 had passed to the name of Jacobus Merson. The appraisement in 1830 was from seven to twelve cents per square foot. In that year it was owned by H. T. Weightman and John Webb under tax deeds; three years afterward it went to Joseph Gales, and later the heirs of Merson redeemed it. In the forties much of it was used in the lumber trade. Mr. Church, a lumberman, acquired the square and erected a number of houses and the square is now the site of many family homes.

The triangle formed by Maryland Avenue, 9th and D Streets, square 386, was a plot which in 1797 went to the Government. Later it was owned by Thomas Law; in 1817 it went to Samuel Elliot; and in 1832 Elizabeth Brannan owned the plot.

Square 327, bounded by Maryland Avenue, E, 11th and 12th Streets, was made into eleven lots and in 1797 was assigned to Mr. Young, father-in-law of Robert Brent, first mayor of the City of Washington. It was then valued at one cent per square foot. Mr. Brent acquired title in 1809, and he made a subdivision of thirty-two parcels.

On the Southeast corner of this block Robert Brent built a fine old mansion. It was a substantial two-story and attic brick structure and in that house he died on September 7,

1819. In recent years after the house had become considerably decayed, it was torn down and replaced by an apartment house.

In the houses that extend eastward from 12th Street on Maryland Avenue, have lived a number of the old and aristocratic families of Washington. The next house east of Brent's home was built by the mayor for his son, Robert Young Brent, and later it was occupied by Dr. James E. Morgan. Next east live Mrs. Roland, aunt of Judge Robert E. Mattingly. In the next house lived John Knight, an engraver of the Coast Survey.

In square 726 near the Capitol grounds, Aaron Van Horn, in 1820, owned property facing Maryland Avenue, on which he had an imposing house for that day. The house stood in the midst of a beautiful garden and was valued at \$1,900, a high value for that time.

In the forties, Ignatius Mudd, afterward Commissioner of Public Buildings, resided on Maryland Avenue between First and Second Streets, Southwest. In this same block, early in the fifties, a lager beer saloon and gardens were established. Because of its proximity to the Capitol, it was here that many of our lawmakers met to discuss problems of state over steins of beer.

EARLY MERCHANTS AND TRADESMEN ON MARYLAND AVENUE

Benjamin McQuay, in 1845, had a home with feed store on Maryland Avenue, Southwest. John Elvans, the well known hardware dealer of that day, resided on this Avenue, as did W. C. Bamberger, a wheelwright. John Sinclair, a machinist; George

Hercus, a pumpmaker; George Crandell and one or two other tradesmen also resided on this historic avenue.

HISTORIC SEWELL HOUSE

A big house, with heavy walls and an entrance that can be described as having an aristocratic look, stands at the Northwest corner of B and 2nd Streets. Maryland Avenue, pursuing its slanting course from the Capitol grounds toward the northeast, cuts across 2nd at B, so that the house faces on Maryland Avenue and on B. Today this house is mentioned as "The Barbour House" because of the fact that it was the home of John S. Barbour,

railroad builder and manager, also representative and senator from Virginia. He lived there from 1871 to May, 1892, when he died. Men whose memories go back to a much earlier time remember this as "Sewell House". The old house and the site on which



SEWELL HOUSE

it stands have several claims to a place in local history.

Lord Baltimore built the first house to occupy the site sometime in the 18th century. Some of the walls and rafters in the basement still remain.* The rafters were rough cut by axes as can be seen by examining them. Sewell built the house that stands there today early in the 19th century.

Perhaps chief among the historic claims of this house is that from within, and from the garden adjoining the house, a shot or fusilade was fired which killed the horse on which General Ross, Commander of the British land forces, was riding while he and his troops were marching through the eastern part of the city late in the afternoon of August 25, 1814, after the Battle of Bladensburg. In some of the British accounts of the incident, it is alleged that this attempt to kill the British commander caused the issuance of the order for the burning of the public buildings and other property.

On the northeast corner of Maryland Avenue opposite Sewell House, General Dearborn, Secretary of War, erected a house. At the time General Ross' horse was killed this house was unoccupied, but some of the snipers were shooting from in and around the house; so the General had the house immediately burned to the ground.

*NOTE - Told to author by member of National Woman's Party, who occupy the building.

MARYLAND AVENUE SOUTHWEST

Land in the vicinity of Maryland Avenue, Southwest, was swampy and was never intended for building purposes in L'Enfant's plan. Because of this swampy condition the locality became known as "Swampoodle" and "The Island". This latter name because Tiber Creek, St. James Creek and the Washington Channel surrounded the district. In 1816, the Washington City Canal was built and drained the swampy areas. After this settlement along Maryland Avenue was more rapid.



A portion of Maryland Avenue from 14th to 11th Streets was a link in the great southern mail route and consequently was much travelled and well worn.

During the Mexican War, a section of Maryland Avenue was used as part of a race track. A turn in the track was at

7th and Maryland Avenue and here the sporting gentry gathered to urge on their favorite horse.

Prior to the Civil War there was a considerable traffic of slaves through Washington. While awaiting favorable opportunity for "running " the slaves, they were held in dark cellars known as "pens". Such a "pen" stood near 7th on Maryland Avenue. Conditions were such in these pens, that many of the slaves died and were buried on a lot at 7th and Maryland Avenue.

THE RAILROAD UP MARYLAND AVENUE

About 1870, railroad tracks were laid along Maryland Avenue, Southwest, and the railroads came to use that noble street as a freight and a switching yard. That section was not only blockaded against the central business section of the city but grade-crossing casualties were of frequent occurrence. Because of these accidents the railroad had to dig a deep cut down below the former bed of the Avenue. This cut is stone walled and is eight tracks wide. The streets cross the cut on concrete bridges. The tracks extended from 14th to 1st Street on Maryland Avenue. The Pennsylvania Railroad ran as far as 6th Street, thence up 6th to



the depot. The B. & O. Railroad ran the whole length of Maryland Avenue, Southwest, and at First Street turned off to the New Jersey Avenue station.

The Avenue ran between the tracks from First to Seventh Streets and thence to Water Street, being split into two roadways thirty feet wide with the tracks between.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

City improvement of streets and avenues was not attempted for fifty years after the founding of the City. Until 1860 Maryland Avenue and East Capitol Street alone were the thoroughfares in the eastern section of the city, although there were some zigzag wagon tracks in evidence in the neighborhood. Though Maryland Avenue was in the route of travel early, East Capitol Street improved more rapidly.

Maryland Avenue, Southwest, for a long series of years remained a dirt road, though then there was considerable travel by Long Bridge. About 1850, however, by an appropriation made by Congress it was graded and graveled.

The cost of improvements made in 1871 was \$210,322 and the residents along the Avenue were assessed on an average about \$240.

In 1872, Maryland Avenue, Northeast, was graded and gutters and curbing put in from 1st to 15th Street. Gravel foot walks were made between 8th and 15th Street and in 1875 these were replaced by brick footwalks. In this year a flagstone foot

way was laid from 1st Street to the intersection of Maryland Avenue and D Street.

In 1873, Maryland Avenue between 9th Street and 14th Street west was graded, curbs were set and brick and blue rock pavements were laid by Albert Gleason, contractor. From 1st to 3rd Street the first curbs were set and a wooden pavement put down.

By July 1, 1879, the average width of the carriageway was sixty feet and the total width of the Avenue was one hundred and twenty feet from property line to property line. The whole of Maryland Avenue east of the Capitol was covered with gravel and had been graded. This grading caused the houses on the south side west of Stanton Park to be left standing on high terraces. At this time in southwest, the Avenue from First to Third Street was covered with 4,344 square yards of wood paving; from 3rd Street to 7th Street was covered with cobble and blue rock; and from 9th to Water Street was covered with granite.

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN EARLY RESIDENT ON MARYLAND AVENUE

Clifford Lanham, Superintendent of Trees and Parking in the District of Columbia, lived at 329 Maryland Avenue, N. E., about 65 years ago when he was a boy. Mr. Lanham recalls that all of the Avenue in northeast Washington has been paved for the last sixty years. He said, "the first paving was an asphalt block which made a durable paving but settled in spots because of lack of binding between blocks and unevenness in the base.

This made the street rough and led to the removal of the blocks which were replaced by better paving material. There never has been any central parking west of Stanton Park." Mr. Lanham further said that he and his father before him supervised the planting of most of the trees in the District of Columbia and there have been trees lining this Avenue as long as he can remember.



GOING EAST ON MD. AVE.

TOWARD STANTON PARK

DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1885, MARYLAND AVENUE, N. E.

1ST TO 4TH STREETS

In 1887, an asphalt block paving was laid on the original gravel base from 1st to 4th Street on Maryland Avenue, by contractor, Patrick Maloney. The area covered was 12,000 square yards and cost \$2 per yard.



The Avenue from 1st to 2nd

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE BLDG.

Street is still paved with asphalt block and is the original asphalt block except for minor repairs. The section between 2nd and 4th Street was removed in 1933 and replaced with a

standard asphalt pavement on an eight inch concrete base. Five thousand square yards were paved at a cost of \$1.66 per square yard by contractors, Corson and Gruman.

4TH TO 15TH STREETS

In 1889, the Avenue from 6th to 11th Street was paved with asphalt block on a gravel base by the W. A. B. & T. Company. This company laid 15,000 square yards at \$2 per yard. Patrick Maloney laid asphalt block paving from 11th to 13th Street in 1890 and from 13th to 14th Street in 1891.

The section of paving from 6th to 15th Street was torn up and replaced in 1914 with a standard asphalt pavement on an eight inch concrete base. 27,000 square yards were thus paved at \$1.66 per square yard by the Cranford Paving Company.

CENTRAL PARKING

A plan was made prior to 1914 to have a parkway approximately ten feet wide down the center of Maryland Avenue east of Stanton Park. Work had already started on the 1914 job when it was decided to build the parkway; so curbing was con-



VIEW SHOWING ASPHALT
PAVING BLOCKS
MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E.

structed, on an extra order on the original contract, in the middle of the Avenue. Seven thousand linear feet of 8" x 13" concrete curbing was laid at a cost of \$0.52 per lineal foot. This concrete curbing was the first of its kind in the District of Columbia. It has held up remarkably well and because of this fact has led the District to use concrete curbing almost exclusively in recent years. At the present time it costs the city \$0.45 per lineal foot for this type of curbing. The parkway itself is one of the best kept and most beautiful in the city; it is under Federal Highway supervision.



VIEW SHOWING
CENTRAL PARKING

PUBLIC COMFORT STATION AT 15TH STREET AND MARYLANE AVENUE, N. E.

In 1917 a public comfort station was built in the intersection of Maryland Avenue and 15th Street. For a few years after it was constructed it served its purpose;



SITE WHERE COMFORT STATION STOOD

however, automobiles continued to increase until it was running a big risk for anyone to try to reach the place. Also the building obstructed the view of automobile drivers and caused many accidents. By 1933 it had become such a traffic hazard that it was torn down.

DEVELOPMENT OF MARYLAND AVENUE, S. W., SINCE 1880

1ST TO 3RD STREET

In 1883, the Avenue from 1st to 3rd Street was paved with an asphalt paving on a six inch concrete base. Four Thousand square yards of paving were paid at \$2.29 per square yard. The Concrete was made with the old type "hydraulic" cement. This asphalt pavement was one of the first and probably the first asphalt pavements in the District of Columbia. After fifty years of service this paving was replaced, in 1933, by Corson & Gruman, contractors, with a standard sheet asphalt pavement on an eight inch concrete base. Seven thousand square yards of this type of paving were paid.

3RD TO 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ STREET

In 1902, three thousand square yards of paving similar to that laid from 1st to 3rd Street were constructed by the Warner Quinlan Company, predecessors of Corson and Gruman. The cost was \$1.72 per square yard. This paving was replaced, in 1934, under the National Industrial Recovery Act with Public Works funds, with a standard sheet asphalt pavement on a nine inch concrete base. Five thousand square yards were constructed at a cost of \$1.58 per square yard. This street has one of the

thickest bases of streets to date in the District of Columbia. The cost, considering the quality of the work, was very low. The job was done by the Highway Engineering & Construction Co.

4½ TO 6TH STREET

In 1904, the Cranford Paving Company constructed a sheet asphalt pavement on a six inch concrete base from 4½ to 6th Street, a total of 2,000 square yards being laid at \$1.51 per square yard. This section of the Avenue was given a thorough heater repair in 1926, 5,000 square yards being repaired at \$0.65 per square yard.

6TH TO 7TH STREET

Maryland Avenue from 6th to 7th Street, in 1908, was repaved with a six inch concrete base over which was laid an asphalt sheet. The job was done by the Cranford Paving Company; 3,000 square yards at \$1.69 per square yard.

9TH TO 12TH STREET

In 1908, the Avenue from 9th to 12th Street was resurfaced by the Cranford Paving Company with a similar surface as from 6th to 7th Street; the cost was the same per square yard



VIEW SHOWING NEW ASPHALT
PAVING LAID WITH P.W.A.

FUNDS

except for the section between 11th and 12th Street, which cost \$1.48 per square yard, at which cost 1,000 square yards were constructed.



GARFIELD STATUE
ON MARYLAND AVENUE

FUTURE EXTENSION OF MARYLAND AVENUE

In 1893, the Highway Plan was established for all territory in the District of Columbia outside of the original city. This plan provided for the ultimate extension of Maryland Avenue from 15th and H Street to the Anacostia River, the roadway to be the same width as the original Avenue; i. e., one hundred and sixty feet. The Avenue will cross Anacostia River on a bridge and join with Oklahoma Avenue and the route will continue to intersect with the Defense Highway.