

IV. COMMUNITY HISTORY

The history and development of the Pasadena/Marley Neck Small Planning Area, like its neighbor, the Lake Shore area, has been guided by its close proximity to the City of Baltimore and location on the Chesapeake Bay. Bounded on the north by the Patapsco River and Baltimore Harbor, the area consists of the Marley Neck and Tick Neck peninsulas. It is a region of contrast in land use. The area includes the Brandon Shores and Wagner power plants, the abandoned Kennecott Refinery, the U. S. Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay and associated industrial and commercial development. The area is also characterized by several small residential communities. Their coexistence with the industrial and commercial uses has been a test of balance in land use and a study of maintaining quality of life.

Long before the imprint of modern society, the region was populated by prehistoric people drawn to the area for its abundant animal and plant life, and its access to fresh water and the Chesapeake Bay. Native Americans are known to have existed in Anne Arundel County as far back as 11,000 B. C. One of the earliest known occupations, known as the Garmen Site, is located just west of the planning area near Marley Station Mall. Another significant site, the Magothy Quartzite Quarry, is located on the southern edge of the planning area. Beginning about 12,000 years ago, Native Americans used this quarry as a production center for extracting material for making high quality tools, projectile points and other lithics. This extremely rare geological formation consists of opaline-cemented quartz, a material that is found in very few places in the world. The quarry no doubt spawned a vast and long-lived trading network among native peoples.

In addition to these interior sites, Indians found the shoreline of the area an excellent location for seasonal harvesting of oysters and fish from the Bay. Evidence of this activity, dating mainly from 500 A. D. to 1400 A. D., is found in the numerous oyster shell middens found along the Bay and its tributaries. One of the largest of these middens, measuring 2,000 feet long by 700 feet wide, represents a lengthy period of use. The area's geographical position, within a larger regional system of migratory and trade routes, created the first trails and footpaths which later became the early transportation routes of the County's European settlers.

By the first European settlement of Anne Arundel County, which occurred in 1649, native Algonquin tribes had virtually abandoned the present day area of the County due to raids by the warlike Susquahannocks from the north. The first settlers were Protestant Englishmen from Virginia who established a hamlet known as Providence at the mouth of the Severn River. The population quickly increased, primarily along the shoreline of the Bay and its tributaries. This rapid settlement resulted in the creation of Baltimore County in 1659. A boundary dispute ensued between Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties, which lasted into the early 18th century. The new Baltimore County claimed the northeast portion of Anne Arundel County, north of the Magothy River. Inhabitants in this area petitioned the General Assembly numerous times to return to Anne Arundel County. In 1696, the legislature returned about half of the peninsula to the County,

making the division line halfway between the Patapsco and the Magothy Rivers. Finally, in 1726, the Patapsco River became the northern boundary for Anne Arundel County.

By the early 18th century, plantations were established in the planning area where tobacco, corn and grains were grown and the region's plentiful stands of timber were harvested. Some of the first property owners were from the Jacob, Robinson, Hall, Boone, Dorsey, Williams, Ridgely, Brewer, Pumphrey and Cromwell families. In the mid to late 18th century, Richard and Zachariah Jacob operated a tanyard on Tanyard Cove. This was one operation on their vast plantation, which included 1300 acres, covering the central portion of the Marley Neck peninsula. Both men were owners of several slaves, who worked the plantation and, presumably, at the tanyard. Extensive orchards of apple, peach and cherry trees and crops including corn, rye, and beans were grown. They also raised cows for use in the tanning business, and sheep.

During the 19th century, the number of farming families increased. In addition to the descendants of the 18th century property owners, new families arrived in the area including the Gray, Schramm, Thomas, Solley, Hancock, Chairs, Schmidt, Spencer, Howard, and Franklin families. Although some tobacco, wheat, and corn remained in cultivation, a shift to fruits and vegetables gradually took place. Known as truck farming, produce grown in the Pasadena/ Marley Neck area was sold commercially to markets in Baltimore and as far as Boston and Montreal. It soon became a profitable livelihood for farmers in northern Anne Arundel County. Seasonal laborers, mostly Eastern European immigrants from Baltimore, were used to harvest the crops for which they were paid in tokens made of brass, known as "pickers checks." The laborers or "pickers" were brought to local farms where they lived for six to eight weeks during the harvest season. Although found elsewhere in the mid-Atlantic region, the extensive use of pickers checks is unique to Anne Arundel County. Truck farming remained a primary source of income in the northern part of the county well into the 20th century.

Many farmers relied on the waterways to transport their crops to Baltimore markets. Some owned specialized boats, such as buy boats and market boats. In addition to this bevy of diverse watercraft carrying local produce, watermen plied and harvested neighboring rivers, creeks and the Bay.

The area was one of the largest population centers of free blacks, outside of Annapolis, in the County during the 19th century. The African-American community of Freetown was established in the 1840s by free blacks. Early landowners included James Spencer, William Howard, Nathan Owens, William Turner, Abraham Franklin and William Hall, all of who were either freeborn or manumitted from slavery according to pre-Civil War Certificates of Freedom. Both Spencer and Howard served in the Union Army, U. S. Colored Troops, during the Civil War. By the 1880s, these early landowners and their descendants had amassed nearly 1000 acres of land stretching between Marley and Stoney Creeks in the southern portion of the Marley Neck Peninsula. Mount Zion and Hall's Memorial Methodist Churches, both with 19th century origins, remain centers of viable African-American communities.

School buildings at both locations and one in Freetown, dating to the 1920s, still survive and number among the handful of historic Rosenwald Schools in Anne Arundel County. Initiated by Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck Company between 1911 and 1932, the Rosenwald School Fund was an ambitious program designed to provide better educational facilities for rural African Americans in the South. Inspired by Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald provided matching funds to black communities for school construction. Thousands of schools, some of which are still standing today, were built across the South using this fund.

The miles of shoreline and navigable creeks in the planning area fostered a lifestyle of water-related activities and economic pursuits for its inhabitants. The beaches along the shoreline of Stoney and Rock Creeks became popular destinations in the late 19th century, particularly with Baltimore citizens seeking nearby resorts for bathing and relaxation. Access became commercially possible in 1883 with the formation of the Stoney Creek Steamship Company and the Rock Creek Steamship Company. Excursionists arrived in droves at such places as Colonial Beach on Rock Creek. By the early 20th century steamers brought vacationers to numerous small resorts on Rock, Stoney and Nabbs Creeks that included hotels, picnic pavilions, and amusement parks. Recreation communities, such as Green Haven and Riveria Beach, were established in the 1920s. Bungalows were built for seasonal use, and each community featured yachting, canoeing and sailing.

In 1899, the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service built a station for the repair of lifeboats at Arundel Cove on Curtis Creek. The Cutter Service became the U. S. Coast Guard in 1915 and its facility on Curtis Creek was expanded to include shipbuilding and a repair yard. Known as the U. S. Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, it was the leader in wooden ship production prior to World War II, during which time the facility converted to steel vessel construction. During the late 1950s, the Curtis Bay Yard manufactured prefabricated housing used for the Navy Antarctic Expedition. Due to its significant role in maritime and military history, the Yard was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

By the mid-20th century, the Pasadena/Marley Neck Planning Area slowly began to change and intensify in residential development. Seasonal beach communities increasingly supported year-round residents who commuted to Baltimore. The late 20th century witnessed the most dramatic land use change in the area with the construction of the Brandon Shores Power Plant and the Kennecott Refinery. These large-scale industrial facilities and expansion of the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan areas transformed the planning area from a sparsely populated rural area of small seasonal recreation communities to a region on the brink of increasing growth and development.