

## **Community History**

Situated in the western part of Anne Arundel County, the Odenton Small Planning Area lies within a strategic transportation corridor, a factor that has guided its historical development. The western portion of the area, historically known as the Great Forks of the Patuxent, was greatly influenced by the presence of the Patuxent and Little Patuxent Rivers. Railroad transportation came of age in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, playing a significant role not only in the growth and development of the planning area, but in the County and region as well. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, major highway construction and the close proximity to BWI Airport made their impact on the future character of the area.

The Odenton Small Planning Area is flanked on the west by the Patuxent and Little Patuxent Rivers and extends eastward to encompass the headwaters of the Severn River. This location proved to be attractive for Native Americans who utilized the abundant natural resources of the area as early as 11,000 B.C. The earliest known Paleo-Indian site (11,000 B.C.) in Maryland was discovered near BWI Airport by archaeologists a decade ago. Another recent find, near Marley Station Mall, revealed archaeological remains of the earliest intact cooking hearths in Maryland (8000 B.C.). Within the planning area, evidence of many extractive sites have been found, where Native Americans camped for short periods of time while exploiting the natural resources of the area. These early inhabitants were drawn to the area for its abundant animal and plant life and access to fresh water. Picture Spring, once located at the present site of Odenton Shopping Center, was a lithic (stone tool) manufacturing and campsite for Native Americans. At present day Piney Orchard, archaeologists discovered the remains of a migratory campsite utilized during the Archaic and Woodland Periods (8000 B.C. to 1400 A.D.). Here, cooking hearths were found associated with lithic workstations. Projectile points (stone spear points) were tested for blood residue, revealing evidence that Native Americans were hunting deer and elk in the area.

The Patuxent River became an important tributary for Native Americans, drawn there by the bountiful supply of fish. Archaeological sites along the Patuxent date to the middle to late Woodland Period (500 to 1400 A.D.) and include several village sites, some of which are located on public land and protected from development. However, many have been destroyed by sand and gravel mining. The area's geographical position between watersheds created a region of high passable ground suitable for trails and footpaths. Native Americans, who were in constant movement between the uplands and the rivers and Chesapeake Bay, utilized these paths, which were also part of a larger regional system of migratory and trade routes.

When the first European settlement of Anne Arundel County occurred in 1649, the 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 Englishman 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. Inland areas, like the Odenton area, were used for resource extraction and supported a limited number of plantations due, in part, to the apparent threat of Native Americans occupying lands west of Anne Arundel County. In the 1680s, Indian raids were reported on plantations at the upper branches of the South River

By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, plantations were established in the area. Some of the first families to settle here were Hammond, Snowden, Woodward, Anderson, Cowman, and Hopkins. They and their descendants and subsequent owners amassed large tracts of land ranging from several hundred to several thousand acres. Tobacco, corn and grains were grown and the region's plentiful stands of timber were harvested. Tobacco was packed into hogshead and taken to Indian Landing, a tobacco inspection station located on the upper reaches of the Severn River. Planters in the western part of the planning area had access to ports or wharves on the upper sections of the Patuxent and Little Patuxent Rivers. Corn and grains were also transported to these wharves, but by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and possibly earlier, grist and sawmills were in operation in the area. The Duvall and Bealmear mills, both located on the Patuxent River, and Dicus Mill on Severn Run, consisted of grist and sawmills, which ground corn and grains and produced lumber for local consumption. Ruins of these mills are barely visible today.

Iron ore outcrops, located in the area and further north along Stony Run and Piney Run, were identified and exploited early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The existence of both iron and timber facilitated the emergence of the iron smelting industry in the region. In the 1720s or possibly earlier, the Snowdens developed an extensive iron furnace operation, known as Patuxent Furnace, located on present day Fort Meade near the Old Forge Bridge. The Dorseys commenced two similar operations at Elkridge Landing, northwest of Odenton, and at Curtis Creek, in present day Glen Burnie. The rich reserves of timber and iron ore in the Odenton area were exploited by these industries well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1831, Thomas, Richard, and Edward Snowden sold the Patuxent furnace and forge to Evan T. Ellicott and Company. They erected another furnace at the site, 28 feet high and 8 feet wide at the boshes, a puddling furnace and roughing mills for converting pig iron into bars which were then transported to the Avalon works near Relay. The furnaces were water-powered, utilizing the nearby Little Patuxent River. Due to depletion of wood and iron ore in the area, many of the local furnaces ceased to exist. The Patuxent works was dismantled and destroyed in 1856, during the ownership of William Wilkins Glenn, John Glenn, Jr. and Robert Lemmon, owners and operators of the Curtis Creek furnace at Glen Burnie.

Just as Native Americans utilized the higher ground between watersheds for early trails, so did the first European settlers. Early colonial roads, roughly following the paths of present day Crain Highway (MD 3), Annapolis Road (MD 175), and Odenton Road (MD 677) crossed the Odenton area. The predecessor to Crain Highway was part of an early north-south system, while Annapolis and Odenton Roads connected Annapolis with Frederick and beyond. These roads are depicted on the 1794 Dennis Griffith *Map of the State of Maryland*, as are roads roughly following the course of Rockenbach and Ridge Roads and South Road in the Patuxent Research Refuge. Another early road that most likely dates to the 1700s follows the present day course of Burns Crossing and Clark Station Roads. Research conducted by Raymond Ringgold, resident of Severn, indicates that it was a segment of a road mentioned in an 1840 land record as the "public road leading from the Forks of Patuxent through the Piney Woods to the City of Baltimore." Others, shown on the 1860 *Martenet's Map of Anne Arundel County*, include Conway, Patuxent, Waugh Chapel, MD 175 (Annapolis Road), Meyer Station, and Burns Crossing Roads.

The development of rail transportation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had a dramatic impact on the Odenton Small Planning Area. In 1837, the Annapolis and Elkridge (A & E) Railroad (the second railroad constructed in Maryland) was chartered and by 1840 was in operation. The line connected the city of Annapolis with the Baltimore and Ohio (B & O) Railroad's Washington D.C.'s branch line, intersecting at Annapolis Junction. It ran southeast from the junction, roughly following the path of MD 32 and Generals Highway, to Annapolis. Several villages and stations were established along its route, some of the first being Millersville, Crownsville and Patuxent Forge in present day Fort Meade. It was not until the arrival of the Baltimore & Potomac (B & P) Railroad in 1868 that the town of Odenton was formed. Connecting Baltimore and Washington, D. C., the B & P Railroad crossed the A & E at present day Odenton. A post office and station were designated and named for Oden Bowie, President of the B & P. This line was later absorbed by the Pennsylvania Railroad and is presently used by Amtrak. Another station was established south of Odenton near where the B & P crossed the Little Patuxent River and named Patuxent Station. Its post office was known as Woodwardville, the name the village retains to this day. By 1878, new stations and associated towns had emerged along the A & E line, including Gambrills and Sappington. Patuxent Forge was changed to Patuxent Switch, signifying the closure of the iron furnace operation. In 1908, the Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Electric Railway was constructed east of the B & P line and crossed the A & E near the present day intersection of MD170 and MD175. This station was used as a transfer point for access to the Naval Academy in Annapolis and became known as Naval Academy Junction.

The numerous railroad lines in the area gave rise to many small villages and towns. However, town development in the Odenton Small Planning Area, like the remainder of Anne Arundel County, never amounted to more than crossroad villages or small railroad station communities that served the local surroundings. The location of train stations created nodes of small development, including stores, post offices, blacksmith shops, schools and a handful of residences. The 1878 *Maryland Directory* lists the following towns in the area: Conaway, Odenton, Patuxent, Sappington, and Woodwardville. Odenton was the largest with a population of 100. Land was worth from \$5 and \$30 per acre, producing wheat, corn and tobacco. There was a church and school, and the postmaster was P. F. Watts. There were two stores operated by George M. Murray and N. P. Watts & Sons. A. G. Cook served as the Railroad Agent. In nearby Woodwardville, A. G. Woodward was the postmaster and operated a general merchandise store in a village of 50 people. Among the population were a machinist, shoemaker, blacksmith, wheelwright, and miller. Two churches and a school served the community.

Railroads helped to facilitate the emerging cannery business at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Canneries, primarily for tomatoes, were built in many locations in the County, including Odenton and Woodwardville. The George M. Murray Canning House, built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on Odenton Road (behind present day 1380 and 1382 Odenton Road) was a successful operation into the early 1900s.

In 1914, the U. S. Naval Academy purchased the 800-acre Hammond Manor Farm for the construction of a sanitary dairy. An investigation following the 1910 typhoid fever outbreak at the U. S. Naval Academy revealed that the cause had been contaminated milk. In response, the Academy established a dairy in Gambrills that remained in operation until 1998. While the

surrounding landscape in the Odenton area changed radically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Dairy Farm remained as one of the largest tracts of open space in the County. At its closure, it was the last operating dairy farm in the County, a function that has been resumed by the new tenant, Horizon Organic Dairy, Inc. In 1997, the Dairy Farm was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, joining the already listed site of the Hammond Manor House and Cemetery located on the property.

The greatest impact to the Odenton Small Planning Area was the arrival of Fort Meade in 1917. The U. S. War Department acquired 19,000 acres of land west of Odenton to develop a training camp. The property consisted of many productive farms and woodlands, surrounding the villages of Portland Station and Admiral on the A & E Railroad. Numerous farmers, merchants and public and private enterprises were displaced; many moved east to nearby Odenton. Acquisition of the Fort Meade property involved over 600 separate land transactions. First known as Camp Annapolis Junction, the fort was named Camp Admiral at its opening in 1917. However, other name changes occurred shortly after construction of 1,460 buildings on the site; it became Camp George Gordon Meade, named for the Civil War General who was in command of the Union troops during the Battle of Gettysburg. In the 1920s, it became Fort Leonard Wood, but by the 1930s it reverted back to Fort George G. Meade. The influence of this land use on western Anne Arundel County was further expanded in the 1950s with the establishment of the National Security Agency on a portion of the fort property.

With the exception of the Hammond Manor House site and cemetery, the surviving historic structures in the Odenton Small Planning Area reflect its period of most intensive development, the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Hammond Manor House, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was the plantation dwelling for the prominent Hammond family. It was destroyed by arson in 1980; the below-ground ruins and cemetery survived. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings in Odenton and Woodwardville are representative of the historic architectural building tradition of the area. Buildings located in the older section of Odenton, such as the George M. Murray, N. P. Watts, and Jones Houses, the Epiphany Episcopal Church, Masonic Lodge, old Odenton Schoolhouse, and the Citizens State Bank, recently restored by the Odenton Heritage Society, reflect the history and development of this community. Woodwardville, a small, quiet village, still retains its late 19<sup>th</sup> century character with good examples of domestic architecture such as the Waters House, built in the Queen Anne style.

Like much of Anne Arundel County, the Odenton Small Planning Area was a productive farming region throughout much of its history. The railroad industry made a major impact during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the development of Fort Meade, the National Security Agency and BWI Airport in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These developments, as well as suburban expansion of Baltimore and Washington, D. C. and the County's own efforts in targeting growth in the west County area, have transformed the Odenton Small Planning Area from a once expansive farmland region to a business, residential and industrial center in Anne Arundel County.