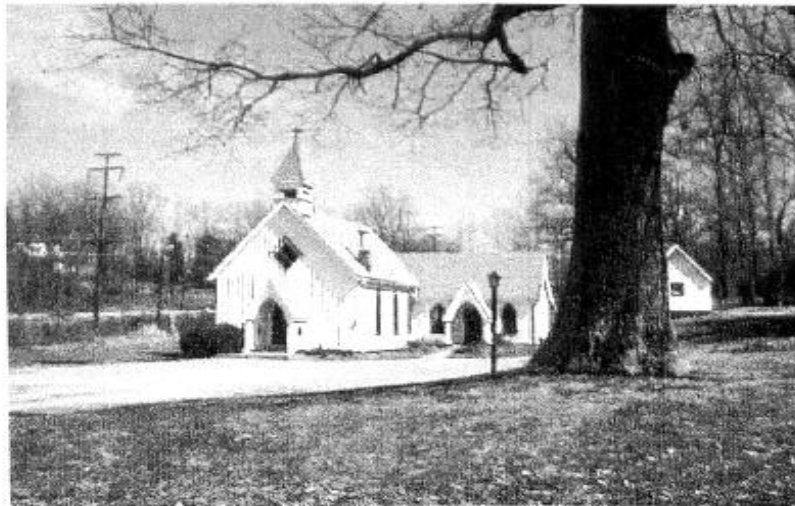


Community History

The Crownsville area, located northwest of Annapolis, is a sparsely populated suburban region. It is characterized by rolling topography, of which a significant portion is forested. The extensive shoreline of the Severn River, with its numerous peninsulas and coves, forms the eastern boundary of the area. The planning area includes the historic communities of Waterbury, Severn Crossroads, Indian Landing, Millersville, Chesterfield, and Iglehart. Current development is still clustered around these early crossroad towns and along the Severn. The predominant land use is the Crownsville Hospital Center, the Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds, and Eisenhower Golf Course, all located in the heart of the planning area.

Like much of the Chesapeake Bay region, the Crownsville area supported a Native American population for thousands of years prior to the arrival of European settlers. Native Americans hunted, fished and lived along the Bay and its tributaries, benefitting from the great bounty of the land and water. The first settlers of the Crownsville area adopted an agricultural lifestyle, growing tobacco as a cash crop. The Europeans arrived as



St. Charles the Martyr Anglican Church, historically known as St. Paul's Chapel (1865)

landowners, tenant farmers, or indentured servants, while the Africans were primarily slaves and free blacks who practiced a trade and/or owned property. Access to the Severn River was essential for tobacco and grain farmers located in the rural hinterland of the Crownsville area. A tobacco inspection port was established at Indian Landing on the Severn River in the mid-18th century. It served as a shipment point for neighboring plantations into the 19th century.

In addition to water transportation, a road system was developed soon after settlement in the late 17th century, becoming more complex by the early 18th century. An important early road ran through Crownsville, from Annapolis to Baltimore, roughly following the route of Generals Highway (Rt. 178). Another ran east-west from Annapolis to Frederick, following present day Waterbury Road and Rt. 175. As it does today, Waterbury Road intersects with Generals Highway, near the Rising Sun Inn; an 18th century tavern, strategically located at this important intersection. Generals Highway is named in honor of Generals' George Washington and Rochambeau whose respective Continental and French armies traveled this route during the American Revolution on their way to the decisive Battle of Yorktown. Washington also used this

route on his way from New York City to Annapolis on December 23, 1783 to resign as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the area consisted of large farms, or plantations. Several of the dwellings associated with these plantations still survive; many are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. They include Belvoir, Iglehart, the Vineyard, Abbington, and Bunker Hill. Although rail transportation was established fairly early, the Crownsville planning area remained rural in character. In 1840, the Annapolis & Elkridge Railroad was completed through the area, connecting Annapolis with the Washington, DC branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Small towns grew around the various stations along the A & E, serving as market and transport centers for the local farming community.

Rural African American communities were established in the area, some prior to the Civil War and others directly after the war. In 1858, the congregation of Mt. Tabor United Methodist Church established a meeting house on St. Stephens Church Road in Chesterfield. The present building dates to 1892. Adjacent to the church is the Mt. Tabor Good Samaritan Lodge, built in 1899. Originally known as the United Sons & Daughters of Levi Beneficial Society No. 1 of Mt. Tabor, the organization provided help to the sick and needy. In 1913, the society became part of the Independent Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria, and today is one of only two Good Samaritan Lodges operating in Maryland. The members are in the process of preserving the building for its 100th anniversary.

By the early 1900s, the rural character of the area and the scenic quality of the Severn River attracted people for recreational purposes. In 1908, the A & E Railroad merged with the Washington, Baltimore and Annapolis Railroad, and became known as the South Shore line of the W, B & A. Rail transportation and an improved roads system facilitated easy access to the river, resulting in development of family-



The Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis interurban stop at Crownsville, circa 1900.

oriented summer communities, such as Sherwood Forest and Herald Harbor. Established in 1913, Sherwood Forest featured a clubhouse, dance and dining halls, golf courses, rustic cottages, and acres of woods.

History

Through the use of self-imposed covenants, Sherwood has retained much of its original purpose and character.

Today, even though major highways (Routes 32 and 97) transverse the Crownsville planning area, it has the lowest population density in Anne Arundel County. The retention of its rural character is due, in part, to the rural agricultural (RA) zoning designation that much of the area received in 1952. Recent residential development has been confined to the Generals Highway corridor with smaller residential zones emerging along Crain and Defense Highways. The "second home" enclaves along the Severn River that originated as summer resorts are slowly becoming year-round communities.