

IV. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Location and Regional Setting

The South County Small Area is located in the southern portion of the county and includes primarily all of the land south of MD 214, but also extends to just north of MD 50 on the western side of the County. The area is bounded by the Patuxent River on the west and the Chesapeake Bay and Deale/Shady Side and Edgewater Small Planning Areas on the east.

The area is characterized by large expanses of rolling farmland and woodland, low-density residential use, numerous historic structures and sites, and historic and scenic roads that traverse the landscape.

Because the area is so attractive and rural in nature, and because of its location near Annapolis and Washington DC there is tremendous pressure from potential new residents to locate in the area. The population projections for the area show that it grew by 14 %; from 14,001 in 1980 to 16,035 in 1990 and by an additional 7.7% to 17,267 by January 2000; and is projected to rise to 18,828 by 2020.

The rural qualities and slow peaceful lifestyle that make South County so desirable are the same qualities that could lead to its degradation in the future. The pressure for residential lots and an agricultural economy that is in decline are the two main culprits that will lead to dramatic changes if addressed immediately.

The vision for the future is that the area south of MD 50/214 will benefit all of Anne Arundel County, by maintaining a rural landscape and agricultural based economy, requiring less infrastructure costs while providing a place for residents to experience our County's agrarian culture.

Insert SAP Small Area's Map

Historical Background of the South County Small Planning Area

The South County Small Planning Area embodies the defining character of Anne Arundel County's historical and rural legacy. Consisting largely of rolling farmland, small crossroad villages and low-density residential development, it is an area where its past agricultural importance has been sustained into the present. This continuity of land use has made possible the preservation of its greatest asset: its incomparable pastoral landscape. In contrast to the dramatic shift in northern Anne Arundel County from a once productive farming region to post World War II suburbia, South County has retained its predominately agrarian landscape and lifestyle.

Just as the South County area is attractive to people today, so it was for Native Americans. Flanked by the historically bountiful Patuxent River on the west and the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries on the east, the land of southern Anne Arundel County served as seasonal camp sites for Native Americans. Here they found rich sources of game, nuts and berries to sustain themselves while harvesting the fish from the Patuxent and the oysters from the Bay.

Although Native Americans are known to have existed in Anne Arundel County as far back as 11,000 B. C., the earliest known sites in the South County Planning Area date to 8000 B. C. (during the early Archaic Period) and consist of small extractive camps. The Patuxent River became an important tributary for Native Americans in the middle to late Woodland Period (500 to 1400 A. D.) Several village sites have been found by archaeologists along its shores within the planning area. Some are located on public land and are protected from development; however, many have been destroyed by sand and gravel mining. Along the Chesapeake Bay, evidence of intensive harvesting of oysters by native people can be found. Large oyster shell middens, one of which measures 2000 feet long by 700 feet wide, date mainly from 500 A. D. to 1400 A. D. One site that remains an anomaly is the Adena Site (approximately 1 A. D.) on the Rhode River. Here ossuary evidence of a people that originated from the Ohio River valley was found. The influence of the Adena culture is rarely seen in the eastern United States, making this site highly perplexing and significant.

By the time of the arrival of Europeans in Anne Arundel County in 1649, the area had largely been abandoned by the Algonquin speaking inhabitants due to threatening raids of the warlike Susquehannocks to the north. John Smith noted one Algonquin village, in the vicinity of present day Jug Bay, on his 1608 map of the Chesapeake Bay. However, the remainder of the County was virtually a no-man's land. County Archaeologist, Al Luckenbach, has theorized that without a resident indigenous population to inform these early Europeans about place names, colonists gave English names to the many tributaries in the County, such as Herring Creek and Bay, West, Rhode, South and Severn Rivers.

The first settlers to Anne Arundel County were protestant Englishman from Virginia who established a hamlet known as Providence at the mouth of the Severn River. They quickly dispersed from their initial settlement and established plantations along the South

and West Rivers and further south. Many of those that settled in the West River area became Quakers shortly after the visit of Elizabeth Harris, a leading member of Quakerism, to the area in 1656. The first General Meeting of Friends in the Province was held in 1672 at West River, according to J. Reaney Kelly, a local historian. The meeting house once stood adjacent to the Quaker Burying Ground at the northeast corner of Galesville and Muddy Creek Roads.

After the turmoil of the English Civil War and the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, renewed his efforts to develop the fledgling colony. He instituted programs to encourage plantation settlement and town development. He and his successors designated proprietary manors in each county in an attempt to increase population. In 1669, Calvert established Anne Arundel Manor, encompassing approximately 10,900 acres. It stretched from the Patuxent on the west, just north of present day Bayard Road, to the vicinity of present day Owensville on the east, and south to approximately the Brooks-Wood Road area. Immediately to the south was a smaller private manor known as Portland Manor, given at first to Lord Baltimore's Surveyor General, Jerome White and later a portion of it went to the Calvert's cousin, Col. Henry Darnall. At its peak in the 18th century, Anne Arundel Manor had 70 tenant farmers growing tobacco, corn, and grains with the Lords Baltimore benefiting from its profit. Of all the proprietary manors established in the Maryland colony, Anne Arundel Manor proved to be the most profitable.

Other tobacco plantations developed around the manors in close proximity to landings and shipping points on the Patuxent River and the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. With the successful cultivation of tobacco came the need to establish ports and towns in order to control tobacco trade. In 1668, 1669 and 1671, through a series of declarations, Governor Charles Calvert, the son of Cecil Calvert and Anne Arundel, created the first ports in the Maryland colony. Among the first in Anne Arundel County was Herrington. Located near Herring Bay, it was apparently a "thriving" town by the time of its official creation by the Governor's proclamation in 1669. Its exact location and physical remains are the subject of ongoing research and archaeological investigation by the County's Lost Towns' Project.

Further efforts to initiate town development and control tobacco trade at designated ports were made by the Maryland Assembly. They passed a series of acts for the Advancement of Trade beginning in 1683. Herrington was again designated as a tobacco port and a new town further north on the South River was designated and named London Town. Within 10 years, London Town became a bustling port town and location of the county courthouse. It retained prominence well into the 18th century, while Herrington slipped into oblivion by 1700.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the South County area remained a strong agricultural producing region with tobacco as its chief crop. The average plantation or farm during this time consisted of 50 acres, with 10 to 20 of that in tobacco and corn cultivation. Most people lived in small one and two room houses built of wood, measuring 24 by 20 feet. Many of the surviving 17th and 18th century dwellings in the

South County area are those built for the upper echelon of society and were constructed on a much larger scale than the average planter could ever realize. Some of the smaller one and two room houses do survive and have been incorporated into larger dwellings expanded in the 19th century. Tulip Hill, built in 1756 for Samuel Galloway, is a magnificent example of a five-part Georgian plan house. Galloway, one of the wealthiest men in the Chesapeake at that time, was a merchant and planter. He was a major investor in Stephen Steward's shipyard, which was located on the West River near Galesville. The shipyard was burned in the Revolutionary War, the only action in the County during the war. The location of the shipyard was recently discovered archaeologically and is being researched by the Stephen Steward Colonial Shipyard Foundation.

Other historic houses, which today are noteworthy for their architectural significance, include Holly Hill, Cedar Park, Sudley, Portland Manor (on Little Road), Larkins Hills, Larkins Hundred and Obligation. All were built for wealthy planters and merchants from the Harrison, Galloway, Darnall, Gassaway, Cowman, and Stockett families. Holly Hill, built in 1699, is the oldest documented dwelling in Maryland and Cedar Park, built in 1702, is the oldest and best preserved earthfast building in the Chesapeake. Sudley and Portland Manor are remarkable early timber frame dwellings built on a grand scale and Larkins Hills, Larkins Hundred and Obligation are important examples of early brick construction. All of the above are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, while Tulip Hill has achieved the status of National Historic Landmark.

By the late 17th century and into the 18th century, a road system was developed in the South County area, connecting the growing number of plantations and farms with landings and shipping wharves and ports on the Patuxent and the Bay and its tributaries. These early roads were part of a larger network of roads in the region. One of the earliest was the Ridge path or road, which roughly followed the route of Solomon's Island Road. This was part of a major north-south roadway connecting southern Maryland with Annapolis and beyond. Built along the highest elevation between watersheds, this route formed a spine through the South County area from which many early roads radiated going east or west to various shorelines. The 1794 Dennis Griffith *Map of the State of Maryland*, shows some of the oldest roads in the area, including Governor's Bridge, Brick Church, South River Clubhouse, Mill Swamp, Polling House, Greenock, Wrighton, Owensville-Sudley, Franklin-Gibson, Friendship, and Sands Roads. Today, many of these are relatively unchanged and contribute significantly to the rural character of the area (see Appendix 1).

The developing road system not only facilitated movement between plantations, but also provided access to shipping points along the rivers. Pig Point on the Patuxent River was established in the 1790s around the landing at Wrighton Road and became a tobacco inspection station. Contee's and Murray's Wharves on the Rhode River and those in Galesville, Shady Side and Deale served as shipping and receiving points well into the 20th century with even more use in the 19th century with the arrival of steamboats.

Post offices were established at the turn of the 19th century and in the early part of that century at many locations in the South County area. Situated at important crossroads,

they gave rise to small villages, which offered goods and services for the local planters and their families. Rural towns such as Davidsonville, Owensville, Friendship, Pig Point, and later Bristol, supported stores, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and in some cases churches and schools. The 1860 *Martenet's Map of Anne Arundel County, Maryland* and the 1878 *Hopkins Atlas of Anne Arundel County, Maryland* show these villages and others, such as Lothian, Sudley, Fairhaven, and Tracey's Landing clustered around road intersections and at river and Bay landing and wharves. In the 1880s, the following villages existed in the South County area: Bristol, Darnall, Davidsonville, Fairhaven, Friendship, Jewell, Lothian, Obligation, Sudley and West River (Owensville). Lothian was the largest with a population of 300 in the village and surrounding countryside, followed by Friendship with 200, West River at 100, and Davidsonville with 60. Friendship, located almost on the Calvert County line, consisted of churches, schools, a post office, a wheelwright, 2 undertakers, 3 shopkeepers, 3 carpenters, 2 physicians, a milliner, and a miller. The other villages supported similar trades. Today Friendship, West River (Owensville), and Davidsonville still retain their small 19th century village character. Davidsonville is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The 19th and early 20th century development of rail transportation that dramatically transformed the landscape of northern Anne Arundel County had very little impact on South County. In 1868, an attempt to construct a north-south route through the county by the Baltimore and Drum Point Railroad failed due to lack of sufficient financial investment. Evidence of the partially completed railroad bed can be seen in some areas paralleling Solomon's Island Road, (one location is on the west side near the intersection of Rt. 255). The Chesapeake Beach Railway, which ran from Washington D. C. to the resort community of Chesapeake Beach in Calvert County, was constructed in the early 1900s. It crossed the Patuxent River at the present day site of Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary and ran through the southwest corner of the county, along present day Rt. 260, Chesapeake Beach Road. The huge embankment built to carry the railroad across the Patuxent can still be seen at Jug Bay and has become an integral part of the park trail system and interpretation program. One station was established within the County at Pindell and was still standing in the 1970s (it is unknown whether it survives).

Steamboat transportation became important to the South County area in the 19th century. It was used at places such as Galesville and Pig Point to transport goods to and from markets. In 1817, George Weems, an Anne Arundel County native, established the Weems Steamboat Line and began running steamboats between Baltimore and the Patuxent River with stops at landings on the Chesapeake Bay. In the 1830s, a substantial wharf and large warehouse were built at Pig Point on the Patuxent to accommodate the increased freight traffic provided by Weems steamboats. Pig Point soon became the largest shipping point on the river. However, the greatest impact of steamboat transportation on the area was in opening it to development as a summer resort destination. After the Civil War, the number of people seeking recreation along the Bay increased. Steamboats plied the Chesapeake and Patuxent bringing thousands of visitors to boarding houses and hotels in Galesville, Shady Side, Deale and Fairhaven. In the 1870s, the Weems family built a hotel at Fairhaven which was surrounded by groves of

trees and walkways. Their own steamers brought guests to the hotel, which was described at the time as "always popular and well patronized."

Southern Anne Arundel County remained a strong agricultural producing region in Maryland throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century. The average farmer owned 100 to 200 acres. Between 1850 and 1880, tobacco remained the chief crop, but corn, grains, vegetables and fruits were also grown. During the late 19th century and early 20th century farmers began selling their tobacco at large auction warehouses at Upper Marlboro, Wayson's Corner, and in Calvert County, as they do today. The economic stability and prosperity of the South County area during the 19th century is reflected in the surviving historic structures built during that era. Examples include plantation dwellings such as Lothian, Roedown, Foxhall Farm, Etowah, Arden, Tilden Lawn, Mt. Airy, Indian Range, Parkhurst, Essex Farm, Oakwood, and the James Owens Farm.

The South County Planning Area has remained remarkably unchanged over its 350 years of agricultural use. However, the amount of farmland under plow has declined in recent decades from 81,000 acres in 1959 to 34,679 acres in 1997. This dramatic loss of productive agricultural land and the slow but steady growth of residential development is transforming South County's historic rural character and landscape.